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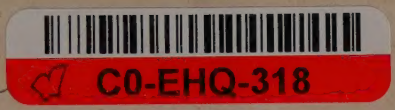

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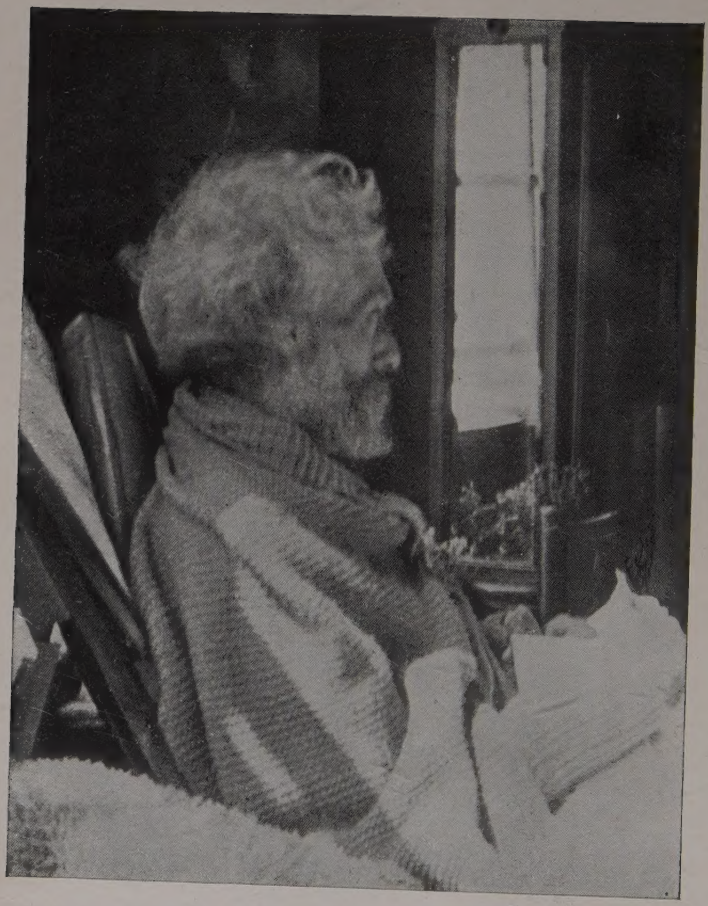

J. Bruce Glasier, at work in his Study, May 14th, 1920.

From a Snapshot by Mrs. Wright-Robinson, enlarged and reproduced by Fredk. Hollyer.

WILLIAM MORRIS

AND THE EARLY DAYS OF THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

BEING REMINISCENCES OF MORRIS' WORK AS A PROPAGANDIST, AND OBSERVATIONS ON HIS CHARACTER AND GENIUS, WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE PERSONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE EARLY SOCIALIST AGITATION

BY

J. BRUCE GLASIER

WITH A PREFACE BY

MAY MORRIS

WITH TWO PORTRAITS

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PREFACE

THE most fitting introduction to the pages that follow would be Bruce Glasier's own words in an article called 'Why I am a Socialist.' He is describing his early life when during the summer months he kept his father's sheep on the braes of Kyle: 'Then came the days of herding, with Burns's poems turned over page by page among the heather, and the never-ceasing song of the streams down the glens.'[1]

The whole passage—too long to quote—is steeped in the wonder of wild places; he who wrote it and possessed this memory of romance had the poet's heart, the poet's vision, and when, before mid-life, a treasure of friendship came to him, it was a gift for which he was spiritually prepared, prized at its full value. What he gave in return for the pure joy that the friendship with William Morris brought into his life can be judged in reading the memories written here. The man of Scottish and Highland blood and he of the Welsh kin had much in common; both gave unconsciously, with the simplicity of wise children, and to us who look back and begin to see their lives in due proportion, the record of such kindliness, such steadfastness, as united these two men in their labour for the common good, is something to rejoice over. For surely if ever an earthly love was illumined with light from the Unknown, it was the affection that Bruce Glasier bore my father. The feeling was neither blind nor uncritical, nor does it show in the younger man any abnegation of independence of spirit. In one of the last letters Bruce wrote to me, he says: 'I know I must have tried his

[1] *Labour Leader*, 1 June 1906.

patience sorely many a time, for I was a wee bit wild and boisterous in those days, and though I loved and indeed worshipped him as the greatest man then bearing us company on earth, our Socialist League equalitarian ideas sometimes led us into foolish affectations of almost irreverence. But his generous heart forgave us all.'

Glasier had been for some years busied with Socialist lecturing when my father became acquainted with the Scottish circle in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and the meeting with this 'half-mythical being,' who was pictured by the ingenuous young men as leading an Arcadian life in the world of poetry and art down South, was to them an exciting event. When the hero comes out of the clouds and stands before his admirers as a man and a good comrade, there is danger of disappointment, of a sense of disillusion. But in this case there was no shadow : indeed, the light of reality shone more warmly and happily, and Glasier writes with a sort of epic directness of the first meeting with the poet, and at once gives the keynote of the story he tells us : 'I felt as one enriched with a great possession.'

It is worth while attempting to get the full significance of such words, uttered by one who had spent his life as a young man in the grey atmosphere of Scottish manufacturing centres, dedicating every possible moment to the cause he had at heart : it meant the release of pent-up thoughts, the splendid proclaiming—by a master-voice—of one's own inarticulate ideals ; it was indeed the blossoming of the wilderness.

The chapter on Glasgow in the Dawn is, to my mind, of the greatest interest, approaching the subject from the standpoint of a man in the centre of the Labour movement, with outlook and values professedly not those of the student. We get a series of intimate pictures of the Socialist doings of those days, as they might impress Bruce's friends who were either themselves of the working-class, or had cast in their lot with that of Labour. From first to last, indeed, the volume has this special weight : it is the story of that

particular phase of British Socialism, told in vivid glimpses by a single-hearted apostle of the cause—himself a poet and 'dreamer'—told in plain language to his fellows, the men with whom he lived and worked and whom he has largely influenced by his force of character. For me it must always have a special value for the simple and serious expression of that unmoved affection which so coloured his life.

But this book does more than tell the story of a particular phase of Socialism in this country; it has a wider and more permanent value. British Socialism is not a purely materialistic criticism of economic theory; behind it there is a basis of ethical criticism and theory. Marxian economics—apart from Marx's historical survey—is little read or understood except by his foreign disciples. William Morris's criticism of modern society and his revolt against it was fundamentally ethical, and the tremendous import of his teaching depended upon his experience as poet and artist. 'It must always be remembered that behind and deeper than all political and economic Socialism there is somewhere present, giving vitality to the theory, just that criticism of life, that demand for freedom and beauty, that craving for fellowship and joy in creative work, that revolt against sordidness, misery, and ugliness of a cramped existence, which Morris so gloriously and with such magnificent humanity expressed. Morris had the heart of Socialism, and no critic has answered him yet.'[1] But because his teaching was not purely economic, his influence on current Socialistic teaching is likely to be overlooked by historians, whereas there is not one of the older Socialist leaders who has not come under his personal influence to a greater or less extent, and this book gives an experience which was repeated in some degree all over the country in his many lecturing tours. Not everywhere was there a follower so prepared to profit by his opportunities, but nowhere was the teaching entirely without result.

[1] Dr. Mellor, in Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, art. Socialism.

Morris's teaching was in truth no new departure; it was a continuation of the British Socialist tradition (as compared with the French, or the Italian or German), but he carried it to a higher point and set a permanent mark on it, as these memories help to show.

In what estimation William Morris held his Scottish friend will be gathered in the letters which are included in the larger edition of this book. He stood high in my father's confidence, and in those stormy days, when sordid quarrels perforce wasted the time of men who were meant for better things, Bruce was one to be relied on for his loyalty and steadiness of purpose—a comfort and solace to that unwilling leader of turbulent spirits.

In some of the letters, Morris's standpoint between the Parliamentarian Socialists and the Anarchists is brought out clearly, and, as he has been claimed by both parties, it is well to have the story of it now given definitely in his own words. It is well, too, that those who in future days may be interested in his life and thought should know that he saw the drawbacks—faults, weaknesses, what you will—of both parties, and declined to be committed to theories and acts he did not accept.

In writing to friends about this proposed volume, Glasier showed diffidence and hesitation; 'lest I might unwittingly in any way deface your Father's image,' he told me in one letter. 'But,' he added, 'it has been borne in upon my mind that I ought not to allow my recollection of these wonderful days with your Father to perish with me.' And so, having taken leave of a busy life that had become more and more dedicated to lecturing and writing in the cause of Socialism, he set to work. In the last protracted illness, in an atmosphere of unclouded serenity, this active spirit, though rejoicing in the coming freedom, did not allow itself to waste precious hours in contemplation; till the last, Glasier went on writing untiringly. 'The Meaning of Socialism' was finished before 'William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement' was written, and

the last of his literary work, besides articles for the weekly *Labour Leader*, was the preparation of a volume of poems of various dates.

Of the satisfaction of leaving practically completed this tribute to his friend and teacher I will say nothing. There are moments in a man's life that one cannot intrude upon, though Glasier himself has allowed us a glimpse of what this meant to him.

Something of the beauty of Glasier's character is shown unconsciously in these pages, his integrity, loyalty, unswerving sense of duty, his disinterestedness in labouring for no material reward, besides the lighter qualities, his comradeship and good humour, his sense of fun and enjoyment of adventure—all the things that endeared him to my father. Indeed, the work breathes of the unaffected, unselfish spirit of the man, and scarcely calls for any such introducing words. But in writing them, two pictures linger persistently and unbidden in my mind: first, the young lad lying on the braes, drinking in the poetry of sky and earth, welcoming life and its riddle; then, the man of middle age, sitting at a desk with bowed head, writing on the blotted page his lament over the dead hero. The song of youth and the lament are now alike part of a story, and in the picture of Glasier that accompanies this volume, where he lies freed of all questionings and all griefs, something may be divined of the calm peace and expectancy with which he waited for the future.

MAY MORRIS.

KELMSCOTT,
January 1921.

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J. Bruce Glasier at Work in his Study, May 14, 1920 . . . . . *Frontispiece*

From a Snapshot by Mrs. Wright-Robinson enlarged by Fredk. Holiyer.

William Morris . . . . . *To face p.* 1

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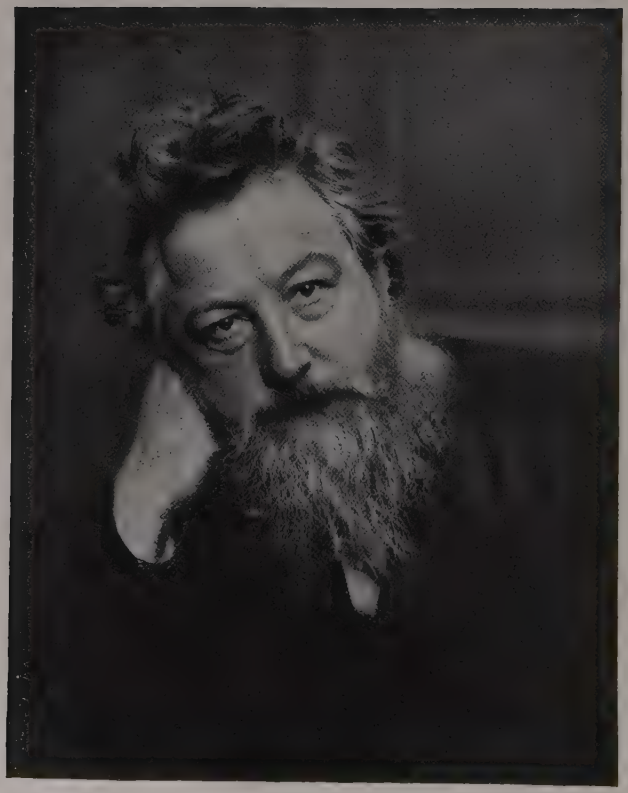

WILLIAM MORRIS

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WILLIAM MORRIS

AND THE EARLY DAYS OF THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Think of the joy we have in praising great men, and how we turn their stories over and over, and fashion their lives for our joy; and this also we ourselves may give to the world.—*William Morris.* (Mackail's *Life*, i. 334.)

WILLIAM MORRIS was to my mind one of the greatest men of genius this or any other land has ever known. In abundance of creative energy and fullness of skill in arts and letters it is doubtful if he has ever been excelled. Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Albrecht Dürer, and the builders of the great medieval cathedrals, are among the few master-craftsmen that rank on an equal plane with him in respect of the eminence and variety of his gifts. This appraisement may perhaps appear an exaggerated one to those who are accustomed to regard painting and sculpture as the highest, if not the only great, arts; for Morris did not devote himself to painting and sculpture, though as a matter of fact he could, and in his earlier days did, paint admirably. But to those, and happily they are now many, who have a better understanding of art, and who see in the industrial and decorative handicrafts scope for

the highest and most delightful exercise of the imagination and skill of eye and hand, the statement will hardly appear an extravagant one.

It was, I think, the late Theodore Watts-Dunton who said of Morris that he had accomplished in his life the work of at least six men of front-rank literary and artistic capacity. This is not mere eulogy. No question has ever been raised in Morris' case as to whether he was or was not a true poet or a great master of his art. The genuineness in quality no less than the remarkable range of his accomplishments is acknowledged by all competent judges.

As a poet he ranks in the great modern constellation with Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Keats, Browning, and Tennyson. As a prose writer, especially of pure romance, he holds a place of his own. He was the supreme craftsman of his age. In the arts of the design and manufacture of furniture, wall decoration, stained glass, book illumination, and book-printing he created a new tradition. He rescued these arts from the degradation of mere commercialism, revived the best observances of old craftsmanship, and pioneered the new. In various other crafts—arras tapestry, weaving, and wood-engraving, for example—he attained notable proficiency. Nor was he, as many men of creative faculty frequently are, careless and incompetent in regard to the ordinary affairs, occupations, and amusements of life. He took a keen interest and displayed an expert hand in many of the often despised tasks of the household, as well as in outdoor employments and recreations. He had a good understanding of all country matters, and was an angler, oarsman, and swimmer. He was a first-rate cook, and never was more happy than when, on a house-boat excursion, he was installed in the cooking galley or the kitchen, amidst pots and pans, cooking meals of his own choice for his friends. He used to say half-jestingly that he could bake bread and brew ale with any farmer's wife in Oxford-

shire. His knowledge of birds, Mr. Mackail tells us, was extraordinary; and he was continually surprising his friends with an unexpected acquaintance with modern science and industrial processes which he sometimes affected to despise. Unlike many of his literary and artistic friends, he took an eager and indeed an absorbing interest in politics and all matters relating to the public welfare; and he was, as we know, one of the most ardent propagandists and unflinching agitators of his day.

Morris was not only great as a man of genius and of general attainments; he was great in the high manliness and in the amplitude and richness of his nature. The impression of strength, of self-sufficiency, of action, of great individuality in him was felt by everyone in his presence. Among his immediate friends, many of them men of remarkable attainments, such as Burne-Jones, Philip Webb, Rossetti, Swinburne, and De Morgan, he was acknowledged the most masterful personality of them all. He occasionally showed a towering temper, but it was wholly without malice, and seemed given him merely by way of emblasonry. He was singularly unaffected, companionable, and good-humoured. There was not a particle of acidity or bitterness in him. He was simply incapable of cruelty or any act of meanness or oppression, of lying or pretence. And while one of the hardest-working, and in some respects most seriously minded men of his age, he was also full of jollity and boyishness, delighting in fun and merry-making, in games and story-telling, and in outings with friends. Limitations and even positive defects of character he had—they were conspicuous enough. But these notwithstanding, he had in him such an unusual combination of noble and delightful qualities, that he stands out as one of the grandest and most attractive personalities of our time.

And forth from his genius and character there sprang as a great flower his art, wherein was made manifest the word and teaching which, alike by precept and by the

example of his life, he gave to the world. He taught us as no one ever before the lesson that art was the greatest expression of joy in work and life, and the highest evidence (as I will put it) of man's likeness to, and his worship of, his Creator. In the intensity of this conviction, no less than in the splendour of his example, concerning the high importance of art as a fundamental test of man's real freedom, of democracy, and of civilisation itself, Morris stands out unique among the greatest teachers of the modern world.

Lastly, and inevitably, Morris was a Socialist. He was a Socialist because he could not be William Morris without being a Socialist. His Socialism was not, as some of his admirers have supposed, an incidental occurrence in his life, a sort of by-product of his career ; it was integral with his genius ; it was born and bred in his flesh and bone. He derived his Socialist impulse from no theory or philosophy or reasoning of his intellect, but from his very being. Under no circumstances of life could he ever have been happy in making his fellow-man a slave, or in deriving advantage from his fellows' pain or misery ; nor could he have done so at all *without being conscious of doing it*, for the very nature of him would have perceived the fact through whatever conventions might obscure it. It was simply impossible for him to accept from others any service or gift which he himself was not ready in his heart to give to others even more abundantly if he could.

Fellowship, he said, is life, and lack of fellowship is death ; and in saying this he was expressing not a mere judgment of his mind, but what he felt within himself and what he expressed in his art and whole conduct of life.

All these things about Morris I did not, of course, know when I first met him and fixed my youthful homage upon him : indeed, it was not until after his death that the greater qualities of his character and achievement revealed themselves to me. But I felt from my first acquaintance with him, as did so many others, that he

was greater than his fame, or than even his remarkable personality betokened him to be.

It was something, then, even to know such a man. It was much not only to know him, but to be privileged to enjoy his friendship. That I was among those fortunate enough to gain that boon, I reckon as one of the greatest rewards of my Socialist apostleship, and as part of the good fortune of my life. It has not only coloured my Socialist ideals and hopes, but has tinged with a glow of romance the memory of all my after days.

True, my acquaintance with him was in actual quantity of intimacy very small, though it covered a period of over ten years—from 1884 till the time of his death. Even at that I only met him some three or four times a year, either while he was visiting Scotland on a Socialist lecturing tour, or when I was visiting him at his house in Hammersmith, and on each occasion only for a day or two. But during these visits I was brought closely in touch with him, and was so eagerly interested in all he said and did, and all things concerning him, that I gained the utmost from these personal experiences. Besides, he corresponded frequently with me, writing always to me most frankly concerning himself and the affairs of the Socialist movement.

Alike, therefore, because of the interest which is generally felt in the personal characteristics of a man of such great attainments as Morris, and because of the interest and importance which his work in the Socialist movement has for so many of the younger generation of Socialists, I propose to set down in these pages some of my recollections of him.

Often during the past twenty years I have been eagerly asked about him, when I have been sitting with comrades round the fire after addressing Socialist meetings, and on such occasions I have always been implored to write down my reminiscences of him. That, however, I have hitherto shrunk from doing, partly because I have felt so much reverence for the memory of the man that I have been

loth to risk writing about him, lest in so doing I should unwittingly deface in any way the true image of him ; and partly because I have hitherto been too much absorbed in my every-day work to afford the leisure for the task—little as it may seem. But now, confined as I am to bed, and with only, as it would seem, a few more months at most in which to write or to do anything more in this realm of life, I feel a longing which I cannot allay to leave some of the treasures of my memories of him as a legacy to the Socialist movement.

And should anyone object to the number of these chapters, and to the minuteness of the details recorded in some of them, I can only plead that to myself and, I hope, to many Socialists at least all that concerns a true appreciation of Morris' character, and the circumstances of his propaganda career, are as interesting and important as anything that can be recorded of any notable thinker and worker in modern history.

It may be asked whether, in recording Morris' conversations, I have relied upon notes taken at the time, or solely upon my memory. I have done neither. Fortunately I have preserved diary notes covering several years of our acquaintance, in which there are brief jottings concerning him. These have enabled me to check dates of meetings and some other details. As for my memory, it is one of the poorest so far as concerns retaining in the ordinary way a recollection of words or phrases, but it is usually exceedingly retentive of visual or pictorial impressions. During the past twenty or thirty years I have often, as I have said, had occasion when talking over early times with friends to recall many of the incidents recorded here, and have rarely found any difficulty in bringing back a vivid recollection of the scenes, but have usually had to content myself with giving the barest indication of the conversations. How then am I to account for being able to set down, as I have done in many instances, what I give as the actual words used by him ?

It is right that I should explain this matter, so that my readers may judge how far they may place reliance on my narrative.

I do not know whether my experience in this matter is at all a common one with writers of reminiscences, but I have found that my memory is, on many occasions, subject to what seems to be a sort of 'illumination' or 'inspiration.' Thus, when I have fixed my mind on one, say, of the incidents recalled in these chapters, the scene has begun to unfold itself—perhaps slowly at first, but afterwards rapidly and clearly. Meditating upon it for a time, I have lifted my pen and begun to write. Then, to my surprise, the conversations, long buried or hidden somewhere in my memory, have come back to me, sometimes in the greatest fullness—word for word, as we say. Nay, not only the bare words, but the tones, the pauses, and the gestures of the speaker. The whole scene, in fact, with all that was at the time visible to (or at least noted by) the eye, and all that was heard or noted by the ear, has returned and rehearsed or repeated itself in my mind. Or, to put the experience in another and perhaps as true a way, my mind has been taken back—winged imaginatively across the gulf of years—to the actual occurrence, and I have seen and heard once more what I then saw and heard.

In writing, for example, the account given in the chapter 'A Red-Letter Day,' of our meeting on the cinder-heap, I was taken back, so to speak, to that Saturday afternoon thirty-two years ago, and lived over again its minutes and hours. I sat again with Morris in the train ; I listened to the inebriated house-carpenter's chatter; I turned away shamefaced on the station platform, while Morris fulminated against the unlucky railway guard. I stood by the cinder-heap and listened to Morris give his address, hearing his voice and observing his mannerisms, watching the faces and hearing the occasional remarks of the audience, and noting the dreary surroundings of dismal

buildings and bristling chimney stalks—I passed again, I say, through all this experience, the scenes all re-enacting themselves over again, as vividly (so at least it seemed to me) as when they occurred.

Not, of course, in every instance has the resurrection of the incidents or conversations been equally full and distinct. In some cases I have had difficulty in calling up a complete replica of the scenes and in recollecting the spoken words, and so have given the spirit rather than the letter of his remarks. But, so far as I am aware, I have set down nothing in these pages that is not true in circumstance and substance, if not in every instance in precise delineation and phrase, of what actually occurred.

In this way, then, have these recollections been written, and the reader must judge for himself what trust he can place in the accuracy of the record.

On looking over again what I have written, I discover that I have brought myself a good deal into my narrative. My intention was wholly otherwise. Indeed, my first idea was to write in the third person throughout, and avoid any reference to myself other than such as cropped up incidentally. But when I tried to write in that fashion, the light failed me altogether ; I could see nothing clearly, and the whole thing seemed destitute of reality and life. I had no alternative, therefore, but to write as the recollections flashed into my mind, or not at all. I must bear cheerfully, therefore, whatever rebuke my egotism—seeming or real—brings upon me, as ordained by my task.

All that is contained in these pages, as I have said, has been written lying on a bed of pain, with no expectation that I shall ever again walk out amongst my fellows. Rather is my mind set upon the new and strange journey that is dimly before me. And notwithstanding long years of agnostic belief I cannot rid myself of the surmise, the hope, the wonder—call it what you will—that any hour or day I shall find myself in the 'abode where the eternal are,' and shall again meet my splendid comrade face to

face. Nay, strange as the thought may appear, I have in a sort of half-dream imagined myself going, while yet some filaments of my present earthly vesture cling to me, to greet him gladly, and placing this book of mine in his hand, without any misgiving lest he should find in it aught that is untrue concerning him, or that might bring a shadow of frown on his brow, or make me shrink from his eyes. And if I can say this in all sincerity, as I do, what else need I say? What else but repeat his own memorable words: 'Think of the joy we have in praising great men, and how we turn their stories over and over, and fashion their lives for our joy; and this also we ourselves may give to the world.'

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

It is necessary to ask my readers who wish to follow understandingly the story of these chapters to bear with me while I give a short account of the position of the modern Socialist movement in this country at the period when the narrative in these pages begins. Without some notion of the origin of the Socialist movement and the circumstances that led to the formation of the Socialist League, under whose banner William Morris accomplished the greater part of his work as a Socialist agitator, many of the references in these chapters would be unintelligible to the reader, and the true significance of his career as a Socialist pioneer would escape observation.

I shall confine myself, however, to the barest outline of events.

There was at the period when Morris began his Socialist career, early in 1883, only one political Socialist body in this country—namely, the Democratic Federation. This body was, in fact, the first political Socialist organisation formed in this country. Needless to say, Socialism itself, or rather Socialist ideas and Socialist teaching, did not originate with the Democratic Federation, or indeed with any modern movement. The prophecy and power of Socialism has come down the ages of history with the growing idealism and social culture of mankind. Only in recent times, however, has the industrial and political progress of civilisation rendered the achievement of Socialism

on a large community or national scale possible by means of political organisation.

Already by the time of the formation of the Democratic Federation there was a widespread unrest in thoughtful minds with the existing conditions of society, and heralding voices of the coming Socialist movement were heard in every land. Robert Owen in this country, and St. Simon and Fourier in France, and Fichte and Weitling in Germany, had earlier in the century brought forward their various schemes of co-operative workshops and communistic associations, and in the revolutionary outbreaks of 1848 abroad, and in the Chartist agitation at home—notably by the voice and pens of Bronterre O'Brien and Ernest Jones—the cry of 'the Wealth for the Workers' in almost clear, class-conscious notes had resounded throughout the world. But the extraordinary advance of capitalist industry, aided by steam production and transport, together with the great exodus to America, Australia, and other colonies, had distracted the attention of the people from their misery, and aroused hopes of more prosperous days. Nevertheless, the gathering currents of Socialist thought were pressing on and finding fitful expression in the writings of Carlyle, Disraeli, Ruskin, Mill, and the more earnest Radicals, and in the Christian Socialist movement of Kingsley, Maurice, Ludlow, and Mackay. Lastly, there came upon the scene about 1880 the outbreaks of the Irish and Highland Land Leagues, and the 'Land for the People' propaganda of Henry George, Michael Davitt, Alfred Russel Wallace, and Philip Wicksteed, which aroused widespread discussion.

But as yet, notwithstanding these signs of social insurgency, Socialist ideas had not assumed any definite political form in this country. The working-class in the bulk were completely under the sway of the capitalist political parties—whose most advanced projects were embodied in Mr. Gladstone's Midlothian speeches of 1879–1880, in which no reference whatever to Socialism, or even to

Labour in a political sense, occurs. There were no Socialist meetings, no Socialist literature. The Guild of St. Matthew, founded in 1877 by the Rev. Stewart Headlam, the Rev. W. E. Moll, and a small group of earnest Church reformers, who avowed themselves Socialists and declared that Socialism and Christianity were one, may rightly claim to have sounded the note of the forthcoming Socialist movement, but it had a religious rather than a political basis.

Such was the state, or stage, of Socialist thought in this country when the Democratic Federation was formed in London in March 1881. The Federation was not itself an avowed Socialist body at the outset, though its chief promoters, H. M. Hyndman, Herbert Burrows, Miss Helen Taylor (stepdaughter of John Stuart Mill), and Dr. G. B. Clark, were Socialists. The most advanced item on its programme was the Nationalisation of the Land; and although Mr. Hyndman (who himself had just been converted to Socialism by reading Marx's 'Capital') at the opening meeting distributed a little booklet, 'England for All,' which was the first publication in this country that laid down the new 'scientific' doctrine of Socialism and called for political action for Socialism, it was not until nearly four years later, September 1884, that the Federation adopted a definitely Socialist basis and changed its name to that of the Social Democratic Federation.

By this time the Fabian Society had also come into being, emerging, early in 1884, from a group of social and ethical research enquirers, calling itself the Fellowship of the New Life. But the Fabian Society, though adopting political Socialist aims, was a middle-class group of controversialists, who sought to permeate existing political parties with Socialist ideas, rather than to create a new Socialist party.

Morris joined the Federation when as yet it was only 'becoming' a Socialist body, on January 17, 1883, exactly ten years, it may be noted, before the Socialist movement

took its wider political form in the formation of the Independent Labour Party. He had, however, for several years previously taken a great interest in Socialism, and had both in his art lectures and occasional political addresses spoken from a definitely Socialistic standpoint.

'I am truly glad,' he wrote to Lady Burne-Jones, 'that I have joined the only society that I could find is definitely socialistic.'

A few months later he wrote her: 'I am sure it is right, whatever the apparent consequences may be, to stir up the lower class (damn the word) to demand a higher standard of life for themselves, not merely for the sake of themselves and the material comfort it will bring, but for the good of the whole world and the regeneration of the conscience of man; and this stirring up is part of the necessary education which must in good truth go before the reconstruction of society. For I repeat that without laying before the people this reconstruction, our education will but breed tryants and cowards, big, little and least, down to the smallest who can screw out money from standing by to see another man working for him. The one thing I want you to be clear about is that I cannot help acting in this matter and associating myself with anybody who has the root of the matter.'[1]

The Federation was then a small organisation consisting only of a few dozen affiliated branches or clubs, the majority of them in London, and each with a score or two of members. Shortly after joining it Morris was induced, very reluctantly, to become treasurer of the Party, an office which, besides compelling him to bother with keeping accounts, a thing he detested, also entailed a constant drain upon his own purse, as the outlayings always exceeded the intakings of the treasury.

Small in membership and still young in years as the Federation was, it had already by the time I am speaking of become afflicted with the disease of internal dissension.

[1] Mackail's *Life of Wm. Morris*, ii. 112, 113.

This strife reached a climax in December 1884, when Morris and the majority of the London Executive seceded from the Federation and formed the Socialist League.

The cause of this split need only be briefly recorded. It arose, as happens in most such cases, partly from a dispute over political matters and partly from a quarrel of a personal nature. The chief political ground of contention was the question of parliamentary policy. Contrary to the views of Morris and his friends, Hyndman, Champion, Burns, and others on the Executive were resolved to make palliative measures and electioneering objects of the Party. In particular they had decided to approve two 'wild cat' candidatures for London parliamentary seats at the then impending General Election—that of Jack Williams for Hampstead and Fielding for Kennington, who polled the ridiculously small votes of 27 and 32 respectively. John Burns, whose candidature at Nottingham was well organised, polled 598 votes out of a total poll of 11,034.

Morris and his side opposed the Hyndman-Champion policy mainly on two grounds: (1) that parliamentary action, so long at any rate as the movement was in merely a propaganda stage, was contrary to Socialist revolutionary principles, and was besides wholly inopportune while as yet the people had hardly the least notion of what Socialism meant; and (2) because the money for running the Williams and Fielding candidatures was obtained from the Tory Party—a fact which Hyndman and Champion not only admitted but approved.

But to these political considerations, which were the ostensible grounds of the dispute, there was added a bitter personal feud between Hyndman and Scheu, both leading members of the Party. Regarding the circumstances of this personal squabble I know nothing and have never desired to know. Mr. Hyndman in his 'Record of an Adventurous Life' declares that this personal feud, the blame of which he casts wholly on his opponent, was really the chief cause of all the trouble. But that I feel sure is

quite an erroneous view. The question of parliamentary policy was then as now one of vital importance in the Socialist movement, not only in this country but in all countries; and it is almost inconceivable that, soon or late, the conflict of opinion on the subject would not have divided the movement into two or more camps.

Besides, we can be quite certain that, as far as Morris at any rate is concerned, he could not have been a party to any attempt to promote the Socialist cause by means of political intrigue or irresponsible electioneering adventures. The acceptance of Tory money roused his utmost indignation. So much did he abhor dodges of that kind that he never spoke of the matter calmly, and in an article in the *Labour Prophet*, January 1894, in which he expressed the hope that a great political Socialist Party might be formed, he closed with the warning: 'One last word of caution. Especial care should be taken by Socialists engaged in politics to avoid even the shadow of a suspicion of an alliance with declared and ticketed reactionists. No one will offer us Liberal money; let it be a deadly affront to be accused of taking Tory money.'

In one of the last conversations I had with him he told me that not only had the 'Tory gold' affair of the Social Democratic Federation scared him against parliamentarianism, but that the allegation that Keir Hardie had accepted Tory money at the Mid-Lanark election in 1888 had deeply, and much to his regret, prejudiced him against Hardie for many years.

The Socialist League was formally inaugurated at a little gathering held in London on December 30, 1884, and immediately issued a manifesto setting forth its principles as a revolutionary Socialist body signed by twenty-three supporters. Among the names were Morris, Belfort Bax, E. T. Craig, C. J. Faulkner, Frank Kitz, Joe Lane, Edward Aveling, Eleanor Marx, Frederick Lessner, W. Bridges Adams, Robert Banner, Tom Maguire (Leeds), James Mavor (Glasgow), and Andreas Scheu (Edinburgh).

Morris was appointed Treasurer and Editor of the new organ of the League, the *Commonweal*, with Dr. Edward Aveling as sub-editor, and J. L. Mahon was appointed Secretary. Headquarters and printing premises were opened at 27 Farringdon Street, and the first monthly issue of the *Commonweal*, which appeared in February 1885, contained Morris' song, 'The March of the Workers,' and the manifesto of the League.

The manifesto was mainly devoted to an exposition of the economic and moral principles of Socialism, or rather of Communism. No stress was laid upon anti-parliamentary methods. Mere 'State Socialism,' whose 'aim would be to leave the present system of capital and wages still in operation,' is repudiated, as are also 'merely administrative changes, until the workers are in possession of all political power.' The Socialist League, it declared, therefore aimed at 'the realisation of complete revolutionary Socialism, and well knows that this can never happen in any country without the help of the workers of all civilisation. For us neither geographical boundaries, political history, race nor creed makes rivals or enemies; for us there are no nations, but only varied masses of workers and friends, whose mutual sympathies are checked or perverted by groups of masters or fleecers whose interests are to stir up rivalries between the dwellers in distant lands.'

The manifesto indeed was such as any Socialist believing in parliamentary action directed towards 'complete revolutionary Socialism' might sign without reservation. In fact most of the signatories were avowedly parliamentarians. It was not until the friction between the Federation and the League had greatly sharpened their differences on the subject of political policy that Morris and the League members generally became definitely hostile to parliamentary methods of advancing the Socialist cause. And this hostility to parliamentary action, as we shall see later on, only lasted, as far as Morris and most of the original members of the League are concerned, for a period of a few years.

As soon as the Socialist League was formed in London a number of the provincial branches of the Federation, wholly or in part, left the Federation and joined. In Glasgow about one-half of us belonging to the Federation seceded and formed the Glasgow branch of the League early in January 1885. The Scottish Land and Labour League founded in Edinburgh, or the Scottish section of the Federation, by Andreas Scheu, also seceded from the Federation, and affiliated itself with the League.

Such in brief was the history and position of the modern Socialist movement in this country at the period when these recollections of William Morris begin.

The Socialist League, short-lived as its career was, was nevertheless an important factor in the making of the British Socialist movement and in shaping its character. The influence of its early teaching, its high idealism, its communistic aim, its conception of fellowship as the basic principle of Socialism, and its emphasis on, not merely the political and economic claims of Labour, but the necessity of art and pleasure in work as a means of joy in life—these ideas, which were the staple of Morris' teaching, and infused by the League into the early movement, have remained germinal in its propaganda, and have helped to give British Socialism its distinctive character.

CHAPTER III

FIRST MEETING WITH MORRIS

LONG before I first met William Morris, or had any notion of what manner of man he was personally, my imagination had invested him with a somewhat mysterious glamour, and he loomed as a star of large but misty splendour on my mind's horizon. When deep in poetry reading in my earlier manhood days, his name was familiar to me as the author of 'The Earthly Paradise' and 'Jason,' though as yet the only work of his that I had read—the only one I could find in any public library in Glasgow at that time—was 'Love is Enough, or The Freeing of Pharamond.' I knew also that, besides being a poet of acknowledged high rank, he was famed in art circles as a designer and reformer of the decorative arts, but I had seen none of his designs, and had little idea of what was the nature of his craftsmanship. In the *Athenæum*, the *Literary World*, and the architectural journals, I had seen occasional allusions to his poetry, art-work, and art lectures, and from these sources I further gathered that he was reckoned a man of uncommon mould among men of genius; something of a prophet or heresiarch as well as a poet and artist. What the nature of his propagandism was, I did not know. A vague something, however, about him, or rather about his repute, gave me the feeling that on fuller knowledge I should approve and warmly admire him. I surmised that I should discover in him one who, somewhere on the higher altitudes of literature and art, was striking out towards new hopes and endeavours for mankind.

But in those days, before the advent of free public libraries and popular art exhibitions, young men, like myself, of the common people, had scant opportunities of acquainting themselves with the works of any but the more orthodox and popular writers and artists of their own day. Controversial writings, such as, for example, those of Ruskin, Mill, and even Matthew Arnold, were rarely on the catalogues of libraries accessible to the working-class. Indeed, I hardly know how so many of us young enquirers got hold of them at all. For the most part, therefore, we had only dim ideas, mainly derived from magazine literature, concerning the new currents of thought that were agitating academic art and literary circles.

Morris was thus a sort of half-mythical being to me when, early in 1883, paragraphs in the newspapers announced that the author of 'The Earthly Paradise' was about to take an active part in the Socialist movement, and had enrolled himself a member of the Democratic Federation. The newspapers spoke of the remarkable genius and personality of the man, regretting that so distinguished a representative of arts and letters should have become obsessed by wild and impracticable revolutionary ideas, and ascribing his conduct to the eccentricity of genius.

The following paragraph, which appeared among a series of notes which I was contributing at that time to a little Radical and 'Land for the People' weekly in Glasgow, edited by my friend Shaw Maxwell, has a far-away sound to-day:

'William Morris is a remarkable man. By the publication of "The Earthly Paradise" he achieved fame as one of the most original poets of our age. He is the head of the celebrated firm of decorative artists "Morris & Co," and has created a new school for that important branch of art. Some years ago he startled his aristocratic and wealthy patrons by betraying unmistakable democratic proclivities. Up till recently, however, his practical sympathy with the

proletariat was confined mainly to occasional and unobtrusive visits to the London democratic clubs, and contributing to their funds. Now he has begun addressing public meetings, and it is announced that he has designed a card of membership for the Democratic Federation, and has written "A Chant for Socialists." Like Mazzini, Mr. Morris evidently believes it to be his duty, despite all other considerations, to "hold aloft his banner and boldly promulgate his faith."

'THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE.'

'Glasgow, *October* 27, 1883.'

That paragraph summed up all the knowledge I then had of Morris. I can remember picturing to myself, when writing it, the wonderful world (as it seemed to me) of poetry and art in which he and his companions, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and Swinburne, lived their Arcadian lives, and from which, like a prince in a fairy story, he appeared to be stepping down chivalrously into the dreary region of working-class agitation.

There was at that period no Socialist group in Glasgow, and although I had been giving lectures on Socialism during the past two or three years to Young Men's Debating Societies, Radical Associations, and Irish Land League branches, I did not know of anyone who was inclined to take part in forming a Socialist society. My friend, Shaw Maxwell, however, then an ardent Land Restorationist and sympathetic towards the new Socialist ideas, was as eager as myself to see and hear Morris, and he wrote him, inviting him to lecture in Glasgow under the auspices of the Sunday Lectures Society, of which he was the secretary. Morris to our delight agreed to come; and about a year later, Sunday, December 14, 1884, came and gave his lecture on 'Art and Labour' in the St. Andrews Hall. It was in connection with this visit that I first met Morris.

Meanwhile, before the date of Morris' coming, a few of us had at last got together in Glasgow and had formed

(early in the summer of 1884) a branch of the Social Democratic Federation. Andreas Scheu, a member of the Council of the Federation in London, who had recently removed to Edinburgh in connection with his profession as a furniture designer, and who had at once founded a branch of the Federation in that city, visited our Glasgow branch, and gave us a glowing account of Morris, boldly idolizing him—alike as the beau-ideal of a poet-artist, and as an archetype of a Socialist comrade. We were, of course, exceedingly desirous that Morris should address a meeting under the auspices of the branch when he came to speak for the Sunday Lecture Society, but his engagements would not allow his doing so. He readily, however, agreed to meet the members of the branch on the Sunday evening after his lecture in the St. Andrews Hall.

He was booked to speak for the Edinburgh branch of the Federation on the Saturday evening before coming to Glasgow, and so eager was I to see and hear him, that instead of waiting until he came to Glasgow on the Sunday, I made a special journey to Edinburgh on the Saturday evening.

The Edinburgh meeting was held in a little hall in Picardy Place, which the branch had recently acquired as its club-room. The hall had been newly 'carved out' of a first-floor dwelling, and was decorated with fine taste and furnished with specially designed cane-bottom chairs—the joint result of Andreas Scheu's artistic skill and the bounty of an Edinburgh merchant who was friendly to the cause.[1] I remember on seeing the club-room how

[1] The donor of the gift of £100 was a Mr. Millar who had warm sympathy with Socialism and working-class interests. He also gave £1000 for the holding of an Industrial Remuneration Conference, to consider the best means of improving working-class wages. This Conference, which was held in Edinburgh, January 1886, created considerable public interest at the time. Among those who attended and spoke at the Conference were Alfred Russel Wallace, A. J. Balfour, Bernard Shaw, John Burns, Professor Leone Levi, Robert Giffen, Sir Thomas Brassey, Professor Marshall, and Dr. G. B. Clark. The proceedings were afterwards published in a special volume.

envious I felt at the good fortune of our Edinburgh comrades in having such a handsome meeting-place, while we in Glasgow had to be content with a dingy little hall in the slummiest quarter of the city for the meetings of our Socialist group.

Morris had not yet arrived when I took my seat in the hall, and I recall how anxiously I awaited his appearance lest for any reason he should not turn up. When a few minutes later he entered the room with Scheu and the Rev. Dr. John Glasse (his host and chairman), I at once knew it was he. No one else could be like *that*. There he was, a sun-god, truly, in his ever afterwards familiar dark-blue serge jacket suit and lighter blue cotton shirt and collar (without scarf or tie), and with the grandest head I had ever seen on the shoulders of a man. He was detained near the door for several minutes, while various people were being introduced to him, and I noticed that he was slightly under middle height, but was broadly and sturdily set. A kind of glow seemed to be about him, such as we see lighting up the faces in a room when a beautiful child comes in.

When the pressure of friends around him was over, Scheu, who had noticed me in the hall—I was a complete stranger to all our Edinburgh comrades save himself—beckoned me from my seat and introduced me to Morris, telling him that I was from Glasgow, and was 'one of the most enthusiastic propagandists in Scotland.' At this extravagant commendation Morris cast a scrutinising glance in my face, and with a friendly word proceeded with Dr. Glasse to the platform at the end of the room.

I now set my eyes full upon him seated on the platform. He appeared a larger man than when on his feet, so that Dr. Glasse, who was taller and hardly less stout than he, appeared small by comparison. He seemed in a remarkable way to open wide his whole being to the audience. This impression of his expanding or opening out when facing his hearers often struck me afterwards as very characteristic of him. He always sat with his broad shoulders held well

back, his knees spread well apart, and his arms when not employed spread wide upon his knees or upon the table; his loose, unscarfed shirt front, his tousy head, and his ever restless movements from side to side adding to the impression of his spaciousness. He was then fifty-one years of age, and just beginning to look elderly. His splendid crest of dark curly hair and his finely textured beard were brindling into grey. His head was lion-like, not only because of his shaggy mane, but because of the impress of strength of his whole front. There was in his eyes, especially when in repose, that penetrating, far-away, impenetrable gaze that seems to be fixed on something beyond that at which it is directly looking, so characteristic of the King of the Forest. This leonine aspect, physiognomists would doubtless say, betokened in Morris the same consciousness of strength, absence of fear, and capacity for great instinctive action which gives to the lion that extraordinary dignity of mien which fascinates observers. I noted, also—but not until afterwards was I aware of the inveteracy of the habit—the constant restlessness of his hands, and indeed of his whole body, as if overcharged with energy.

In introducing him, Dr. Glasse spoke of the significance of the fact that the most gifted artistic genius of our day had associated himself with a movement that was everywhere condemned as being but the expression of sordid and uncultured discontent. Yet no one could say that William Morris was uncultured or had any reason in a worldly sense to be discontented with his lot. It was because of his extraordinary gift of political and artistic insight that he realised more keenly than did the men of his class the hopeless ugliness and injustice of our present social system and was in revolt against it. William Morris was not only a prophet of Socialism but was himself a prophecy of Socialism.

The subject of Morris' lecture was 'Misery and the Way Out,' one of his best and most characteristic lectures, which, however, he but rarely repeated. I was too deeply interested on this occasion, once he rose to deliver the

lecture, in the matter of his discourse, to observe or indeed be conscious at all of the style of his speaking or mannerism on the platform, concerning which I may offer some descriptive notes later on when I come to speak of the general characteristics of his propaganda work. Enough to say for the present that I listened to him with more than delight. His lecture was, as himself, to me a thing of great joy. I saw no fault whatever in him—I felt as one enriched with a great possession. In him my ideal of man was realised. I fell incontinently into a hero-worship which has, as the reader will now have realised, lasted till this day, and of which I am neither ashamed nor unashamed.

CHAPTER IV

GLASGOW IN THE DAWN

I HAD to leave the Edinburgh meeting immediately after Morris finished his lecture, as I had to return to Glasgow that night. Morris came on to Glasgow early on the Sunday, and was, I think, the guest of Professor John Nichol, of the Chair of Literature. I did not see him until the evening meeting in St. Andrews Hall. Despite the wretched weather, the hall, the largest in Glasgow, seating nearly 5000 people, had an audience of about 3000 for him. Perhaps in no other city in the kingdom could audiences of a higher level of intelligence be obtained than those which assembled on Sunday evenings in Glasgow at that period, under the auspices of the Sunday Society, to listen to lecturers of the variety and stamp of Professor Tyndall, Alfred Russel Wallace, Ford Madox Brown, W. M. Rossetti, Bret Harte, Henry George, and Professor John Stuart Blackie. For while the Sabbatarian ban, then still stringent in Scotland, against the holding of any but religious meetings on Sundays kept away the more timid of the intellectual élite, it ensured, on the other hand, that the audiences which attended the Sunday Society lectures were for the greater part composed of men and women whose minds had been aroused from orthodox sloth and were prepared to take unconventional paths. Morris himself remarked on the prevalence of eager, intelligent faces in the crowded seats near the platform. There were, of course, among his listeners a considerable number of

university and art school students, artists, and literary people, but by far the greater number were artisans of the thoughtful and better-read type, who in those days formed, in Glasgow at any rate, a large proportion of the working class—a larger proportion, I regret to think, than is the case nowadays.

On his appearing on the platform Morris was scanned with the keenest interest. His unconventional dress, his striking head, and his frank, unaffected bearing at once favourably impressed the audience, which gave him, not perhaps quite an enthusiastic, but rather, as I thought, an exceedingly friendly and respectful reception. A pleasant hum of expectation passed through the hall as he purposefully laid his manuscript on the reading-stand, and planted the water-bottle close to his reach, and 'shook his wings out,' as one might say, before beginning to speak.

He read his lecture, or rather recited it, keeping his eye on the written pages, which he turned over without concealment. There being more room to swing about in than on the Edinburgh platform, he was freer in his movements, and every now and then walked to and fro, bearing his manuscript, schoolboy-like, in his hand. Occasionally he paused in his recital, and in a 'man to man' sort of way explained some special point, or turned to those near him on the platform for their assent to some particular statement. Of the lecture itself I only remember that it seemed to me something more than a lecture, a kind of parable or prediction, in which art and labour were held forth, not as mere circumstances or incidents of life, but as life or the act of living itself. As we listened, our minds seemed to gain a new sense of sight, or new way of seeing and understanding why we lived in the world, and how important to our own selves was the well-being of our fellows. His ideas seemed to spring from a pure well of idealism within himself, and in his diction the English language had a new tune to the ear. No such an address had ever been heard in Glasgow before; no such single-

minded and noble appeal to man's inherent sense of rightness and fellowship towards man.

It is not easy for thinkers of the present generation to understand how strange and wonderful in those days were the tidings of this discourse, alike to the few of us who were already on the Socialist path, and to the many who had hardly, if at all, ever considered the idea of the possibility of 'making the world anew.' Socialist principles generally, and Morris' own distinctive Socialist views, have now become more or less familiar to everyone ; but how different it was in the days when Gladstonian Liberalism represented the utmost political hopes of civilisation ! But not all the audience were in ready response. That the sympathies of the majority were, for the time being at least, fairly won by the lecture was testified alike by the eager interest with which they followed every word and by their frequent bursts of applause during its delivery. There were, however, a good sprinkling of dissentients, chiefly old Radicals, men with firmly-set lips and cogitative brows, who, while unable to withhold their applause from the democratic sentiments in the lecture, never for a moment lost sight of their inveterate individualist doctrines. These men shook their heads doubtfully from time to time as they realised how far beyond their accustomed political horizon the lecture would lead them. I remember observing with amusement when the meeting was over some of these old veterans lingering in their seats or standing in groups at the doorway of the hall, eagerly expostulating to one another concerning the danger or impossibility of the views which had been laid before them. One old Secularist whom I knew well remarked to me irritably, but with a wistful look in his deeply-recessed but wonderfully bright eyes, as he passed out by the platform door : 'Ah, young man, I heard a' that kind o' thing frae Robert Owen and Henry Hetherington fifty and more years ago. They were going to bring in the New Moral World, as they ca'd it, but they found human nature too hard a flint to flake. Na, na, it hasna'

come in my day, and it'll no come in yours; and it'll no come at a' if you're going to wreck the Liberal Party as some o' your friends are trying their best to do.'[1]

Yet there were present at the lecture (as there were at nearly all our Socialist meetings) a few veteran Owenites who had not wholly lost the faith and hopes of their younger days. These aged Radicals, who were in most instances Freethinkers, listened enrapt to the unfolding afresh of the ideas of the Communist Commonwealth, and were pathetically eager to communicate their joy in beholding once more in the sunset of their years the glory of vision which had filled their eyes in the morning glow on the hill-tops long ago.

This was Morris' first lecture in Glasgow, but it was not the first pronouncement of Socialism before a large audience in Glasgow. Two months previously Mr. Hyndman had publicly inaugurated the new branch of the Social Democratic Federation by a lecture on Socialism to a crowded audience of 1200 people in the Albion Hall. This may be regarded as the first official statement in Glasgow of modern 'scientific' Socialism, though Social Democratic principles had been explained from the platform of the new branch in small halls for several months previously. Morris and Hyndman were then the two most prominent representatives of the Socialist movement in this country, and their lectures in Glasgow in the back-end of the year 1884 mark definitely the beginning of public Socialist propaganda in what has since proved the most active centre of Socialist agitation in the Kingdom.

But what a difference there was between the two lectures, and between the two lecturers! Hardly could a greater contrast be conceived. Indeed, alike in matter and in spirit, both the lectures and the lecturers might have

[1] This was an allusion to the Land Restoration League candidatures of Shaw Maxwell and William Forsyth, who contested Parliamentary seats in Glasgow at the General Election, 1884, in opposition to the official Liberal nominees.

seemed to belong to different worlds or civilisations. Hyndman, striking in appearance, with his long, flowing, senatorial beard, his keen, restless, searching eyes, and full, intellectual brow, dressed in the city best, frock-coat suit of the day, with full display of white linen—his whole manner alert, pushful, and, shall I say, domineering—looked the very embodiment of middle-class respectability and capitalist ideology ; a man of the world, a Pall Mall politician from top to toe.

I cannot remember the arguments of his lecture ; I can only recall the impression made by it on my mind at the time. Brilliant and convincing it undoubtedly was—dealing almost wholly with the economic and political malefactions of the capitalist system, and I enjoyed it greatly. Racy, argumentative, declamatory, and bristling with topical allusions and scathing raillery, it was a hustings masterpiece. But it was almost wholly critical and destructive. The affirmative and regenerative aims of Socialism hardly emerged in it. The reverberating note, in feeling if not in phrase, was 'I accuse, I expose, I denounce.' He seemed to look round the civilised world and see there nothing but fraud, hypocrisy, oppression, and infamy on the part of the politicians and money-mongers on the one hand, and on the other only wooden-headed ignorance, stupidity, and servility on the part of the working class.

Mankind appeared in his view compounded of oppressors and oppressed, fleecers and fleeced, dupers and duped. He was jauntily cynical, or affected to be so. 'I am an educated middle-class man. I derive my living from the robbery of the workers. I enjoy the spoil, because it is in itself good, and the workers are content, and apparently desirous that I should enjoy it. Why therefore should I object to their slaving for my enjoyment if they themselves don't ?' Yet nevertheless there was in his protagonism a fiery and even fanatical zeal. He appealed for better things—for justice and democracy—for a new system of politics and economics, though he hardly indicated whence

would come the motive or the power to effect the change, except in the material factors of civilisation—the inevitable next stage of social evolution.

I heard Hyndman's lecture, as I have said, with real enjoyment. It confounded and exasperated his fellow-respectables in the audience, and it stung and roused the working class. His argument against Capitalism was incontestable. In the field of economics his victory over the opponents of Socialism was, or seemed to be, complete. But the lecture, though it excited, did not inspire. One gained no increase of faith in man's humanity to man from it. There was hardly a ray of idealism in it. Capitalism was shown to be wasteful and wicked, but Socialism was not made to appear more practicable or desirable. There was, in fact, very little Socialism in the lecture at all—it was an anti-capitalist ejaculation.

When I contrasted Morris' lecture with Hyndman's, and compared the two men themselves—their impress on their hearers, their personal qualities—I felt then, as I have felt ever since, that the two lectures were different kinds of Socialism, even as the two men were at heart different types of Socialists. And I then felt, and still feel, that I liked the one Socialism and not the other. And I felt, and now feel more than ever, that the one Socialism is true, universally and for ever, while the other Socialism is at least only half-Socialism, and makes only temporary and conditional appeal, and that not to the higher social but to the more groundling and selfish instincts of the race.

This feeling that Morris and Hyndman represented two widely different conceptions of Socialism was impressed upon me in a curious way by an experience that befell Morris himself on the night of his first Glasgow lecture which I have already described. It had been arranged, as mentioned in the previous chapter, that after his lecture Morris should come along to the meeting-place of our Glasgow branch of the Federation for a short chat with

the members. As soon, therefore, as he had gone through the civility of greeting a number of literary and 'art' folk who had gathered in the reception-room, he came away with Mavor and myself across the city to Watson Street, off the Gallowgate, where upstairs in a low-ceilinged warehouse flat the branch meetings were held. He arrived just as the public meeting was over, and found a dozen or so members grouped round the platform awaiting Morris' coming, W. J. Nairne, the secretary, acting as chairman.

The trouble inside the London Executive of the Federation, of which I have spoken in a previous chapter, had already divided the Glasgow branch into two factions. Nairne was unschooled, but an exceedingly zealous propagandist, who with myself had been chiefly instrumental in forming the branch, and was a keen partisan on the Hyndman side, so much so that he greeted Morris quite frigidly on his arrival, only grudgingly offering him his hand. The members generally, however, gave Morris a hearty cheer. Nairne said that he supposed Comrade Morris would like to say a few words to the members, and with this rather discouraging invitation Morris briefly addressed the meeting.

He was glad, he said, to have the opportunity of meeting for the first time his comrades in Glasgow—the few who had banded themselves together to begin the tremendous task of bringing into being a Socialist Commonwealth in Great Britain, and he congratulated them on the signs he had observed in Glasgow and Edinburgh of public interest in the subject of Socialism. He then alluded in careful words to the friction in the London Executive on the question of political policy, and expressed the hope that the dispute would be got over and that they would all be able to work together in unity inside the Federation; but even should the regrettable happening come that the two sides resolved to separate, he hoped both would continue friendly towards one another, making common cause for the overthrow of the capitalist system.

Immediately Morris concluded his remarks Nairne proceeded to heckle him, much as he might have done an avowed opponent of Socialism. Though surprised at the hostile attitude of Nairne and the catechistic nature of his questions, Morris showed no resentment, but answered the questions quite good-naturedly, and it was evident that the meeting felt drawn towards him, though the greater number of those present were, as I knew, ranged with Nairne on the Hyndman side.

On his rising to go, Nairne, as a sort of parting shot, put to him the question : 'Does Comrade Morris accept Marx's theory of value ?' Morris' reply was emphatic, and has passed into the movement as one of the best remembered of his sayings : 'I am asked if I believe in Marx's theory of value. To speak quite frankly, I do not know what Marx's theory of value is, and I'm damned if I want to know.' Then he added : 'Truth to say, my friends, I have tried to understand Marx's theory, but political economy is not in my line, and much of it appears to me to be dreary rubbish. But I am, I hope, a Socialist none the less. It is enough political economy for me to know that the idle class is rich and the working class is poor, and that the rich are rich because they rob the poor. That I know because I see it with my eyes. I need read no books to convince me of it. And it does not matter a rap, it seems to me, whether the robbery is accomplished by what is termed surplus value, or by means of serfage or open brigandage. The whole system is monstrous and intolerable, and what we Socialists have got to do is to work together for its complete overthrow, and for the establishment in its stead of a system of co-operation where there shall be no masters or slaves, but where everyone will live and work jollily together as neighbours and comrades for the equal good of all. That, in a nutshell, is my political economy and my social democracy.'

Bidding the group good-bye with an encouraging word about the stir the Free Speech agitation was creating in

London, Morris left the meeting, in company with Mavor, and next morning returned to London. Though he could not fail to observe Nairne's inquisitorial behaviour, he was not in the least offended at it, and remarked good-humouredly going downstairs: 'Our friend Nairne was putting me through the catechism a bit, after your Scottish Kirk-Session fashion, don't you think? He is, I fancy, one of those comrades who are suspicious of us poetry chaps, and I don't blame him. He is in dead earnest, and will keep things going, I should say.'

And Morris was right. Nairne was in dead earnest, and kept the Federation going in Glasgow, often almost single-handed, till his death twenty years later. By occupation he was a day-labourer (a stone breaker), with a wife and five children to support, and though industrious and a teetotaler his life was a hard and colourless one, and poetry and art were trivialities to him. He was class-conscious to the last degree. Somewhat sombre in mood, and narrow and intolerant in his political creed, he was nevertheless of a kindly disposition, a good husband and father, and a staunch co-operator and trade unionist. Morris afterwards used to ask in a friendly way about him. He, more than any other, was the founder and pioneer of the Social Democratic Federation in Scotland.

It was, as I have said, a curious circumstance that Morris, as a sequel to his meeting earlier in the evening, when his lecture envisaging the glowing hopes of Socialism had seemed to captivate the minds of a vast gathering of the unregenerate public, should have experienced this sudden transition into a small disillusionising assembly of 'elect brethren,' muffled in the spiritual pride and exclusiveness of the old-world sects. No less curious was it that in the person of his Socialist comrade, Nairne, the nemesis of labour without art, and life without joy, of which he had been speaking, should have been so strikingly personified.

Yet the mystery of the Word abides. How much of the seed sown among the 3000 hearers in the St. Andrews

Hall took root, and afterwards bore fruit, none can tell. But to the eye that great audience melted away into nothingness, leaving no visible trace, whereas the little group of Socialists remained in being and endured, diffusing forth such light of Socialism as it had, even if it were only as the glow-worm's little ray in the dark.

CHAPTER V

HIS COMRADESHIP: TRAITS AND INCIDENTS

Mr. Mackail and other writers speak of Morris' dislike to going into society or taking part in the usual amenities of social intercourse. He lived, even as he worked, in his own way, heeding very little the conventionalities of his class or profession. This peculiarity has been noted as being a rather singular characteristic in one who laid so much emphasis on neighbourliness and mutual aid, and who enunciated the axiom that 'Fellowship is life and lack of fellowship is death,' and there are those who discover in his behaviour indications of an unsocial trait in his nature, a disposition of aloofness towards his fellows.

Therein, I think, Morris is misunderstood. I cannot, of course, speak of him from such familiar acquaintance as many of his older and more intimate friends enjoyed, but so far as my own knowledge of him during the last ten years of his life goes, I should say that instead of being in any degree of an unsocial or seclusive disposition, he was pre-eminently companionable by nature. I find also that in the biographies of Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Swinburne, and other of his more celebrated associates, he invariably figures as a delightful, even if sometimes a somewhat unmanageable, companion—always he is the leading spirit in the conversation and fun of their gatherings. True he displayed intense self-willedness so far as concerned his own ways of life and his work, and demanded a good deal of home seclusion when preoccupied with his writing and his art schemes. His

dislike, too, of many of the ways of modern life, and especially his impatience with the mere banalities of conversation and trivialities of politeness that make up so much of the routine of conventional society, caused him to shun many of the customary modes of social intercourse. But it was the ardour and strength of his social feelings, rather than any lacking or weakness of amiability in him that caused him to detest these conventions.

In the working class there is, generally speaking, much greater freedom of social intercourse, or, at any rate, much less routine and rigidity in the customs of friendship and civility, than among the middle and upper classes. Men and women of the working class may more freely choose their companions and company, and are commonly more sincere, if sometimes more ungainly, in their modes of coming and going amongst their friends. It is noteworthy, therefore, that whatever aloofness or exclusiveness, whatever of that element of aristocratic reserve of which Mr Mackail speaks, Morris may have shown in his earlier or later years amongst his own class, he betrayed not the least disposition of that kind in his later years when amongst his Socialist comrades of the working class. In these associations he exhibited no trace of inurbanity, except perhaps a certain shade of shyness at times. On the contrary, he was always esteemed one of the most friendly and jolly of comrades.

It would be an easy and a delightful task for me to multiply these pages with incidents bringing into view the companionableness and unfailing sense of equality displayed by Morris when campaigning with his Socialist comrades, whether when amongst those, as at Hammersmith, with whom he was personally acquaint, or amongst those up and down the country who were for the most part strangers to him. So generally known in the movement was his sociability in this respect that there were few occasions of his visiting branches on his lecturing tours but some sort of a special gathering or outing was arranged in order that the

rank and file of the members might share the enjoyment of his company.

To Morris, who, quite apart from the aversion which his Socialist principles gave him to all assertions of class inferiority, was ever impatient of mere formalities and gentilities, and who had an intense dislike of 'lionising' or being 'on show,' it required as a rule no little self-restraint to endure any sort of display of personal homage, even when without any taint of snobbery. The fact, therefore, that he submitted himself so willingly as he did on those occasions to the fraternal exploitation of his fame is striking testimony to the basic good-heartedness of his nature.

One of the many testing experiences of this kind which I recall occurred in connection with his visit to Glasgow, when he spoke there for the first time under the auspices of the newly formed branch of the League. On the Saturday preceding the Sunday lecture he was taken on a steamboat excursion to Lochgoilhead, in order that he might enjoy a glimpse of the scenery of the Clyde, and that at the same time members and friends of the branch might have an opportunity of making the acquaintance of their distinguished comrade. A function of this kind in which the guest is obliged to submit himself to the process of being casually introduced to a multitude of strangers, to whom he is expected to make himself agreeable and interesting, is a trying enough ordeal even to public men who are accustomed to, and take a pleasure in, public receptions, but to a man of Morris' temperament it is usually a positive torture. Yet Morris bore the ordeal, an all-day-long one, magnificently. So full of pleasure was he in the thought of serving the movement in any capacity at all, that I doubt if he felt the task of the day's civilities half so irksome as would many a man of a more insensitive but much less enthusiastic nature. Only when he was pressed rather witlessly by some of the younger quidnuncs to give his opinion on much disputed questions of art or literature—subjects particularly distasteful to him in casual conversation—did he display signs

of impatience. Happily, however, the majority of the party were content to let Mavor, Craibe Angus, and one or two other wiser heads act as the chief spokesmen of the company, with the result that we had from Morris many delightful discussions, brimful of history, folklore, and stories, old and new—so that a workman comrade remarked afterwards that the trip had been to him 'as good as a university education.'

Nor were there lacking some rather droll incidents, one of which particularly amused Morris, who chuckled over it many a time in after days. Attention had been called to the fact that a number of places which the steamboat passed on its way, such as Ardmore, Ardentinnie, Ardgoil, bore evidence from their names of the Norsemen's settlement in Scotland. This led Morris to relate one or two of the old Norse legends, whereupon one of our comrades, a professional man, who had been talking freely to Morris about literature, and had conveyed, perhaps unwittingly, the impression to all of us that he was familiar with Morris' works, stumbled on the remark, 'Have you never thought, Mr. Morris, of translating into English verse some of these old Norse tales? I feel sure they would take on with the general reader much better than Classic themes which have been rather overdone, don't you think, by our poets?'

The maladroitness of such a remark, addressed to one of the chief, if not the greatest modern versifier of both Norse and Classic themes, was perceived by most, if not all, the other listeners, and uncomfortable looks went round. Morris, however, beamed with enjoyment of the situation, 'But I assure our friend,' he replied, with sly emphasis, 'that I *have* thought about it, and have even tried my hand at the job. The result, however, has hardly "taken on" quite as well with the general reader as our friend supposes it would. He is probably right about the Classic business being overdone, and I confess myself one of the overdoers.' The conversation was mercifully switched on to a different topic.

Another member of the party, a city councillor, who was an ardent Henry Georgite, fancied he was making himself both entertaining and instructive to our guest, by immediately citing from a notebook, which was never out of his hand, the rent value of the land in the neighbourhood of any part of the landscape on which Morris' eye happened for a moment to rest.

Another friend, an enthusiastic vegetarian, was eager to ascertain what the dietetic habits were of Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Swinburne, and other men of genius with whom Morris was acquaint, and assured Morris that he would find his intellect much clearer, and feel fit for twice as much work, if he gave up flesh-eating and stimulants !

There were, of course, several young aspirants to literary and art fame who took occasion to waylay Morris when he was by himself, and submit to him examples of their verses or specimens of their designs—all unconscious, let us hope, of the squirming of their victim !

Morris, I repeat, bore himself splendidly through all this prolonged heckling and harassment, and his forbearance never once gave way. Is there, I wonder, any other poet or artist of repute who would have endured a similar experience with so much patience and good-humour ? I cannot think of anyone. Shelley would have fled the steamboat at the first port of call ; Wordsworth would have ensconced himself on a campstool and gone to sleep ; Tennyson would have hidden himself away somewhere—if need be, in the coal-hole.

The Lochgoilhead excursion was, however, an exceptional experience. Generally, Morris' experiences of the fraternal receptions arranged on the occasion of his visits to branches were of a less exacting kind. Even in Glasgow, where we were always apt to exploit the fame and zeal of our elect brethren to the utmost, we did better on after occasions. I remember how wholly delightful was the tea-party meeting we held in his honour on his next visit the following season. A more enjoyable and appropriate

little celebration could hardly be wished. We had no lack of good singers amongst us, and we offered our guest a feast of Scottish song which he acknowledged was a real treat to him. He himself read the speech of John Ball at the market-place from his own 'Dream of John Ball,' which was then appearing in weekly instalments in the *Commonweal*. He read, or rather chanted, that wonderful apologue in a rich, solemn strain, as one whose own heart and soul were in every word, and such was the effect of the recital that we all felt as though it were John Ball himself who was speaking to us and we were the yeomen assembled round him and were being consecrated with him to the Cause 'even unto life or death.' None of those present that evening would ever forget how strangely and deeply we were moved by that reading.

Our gathering, though only consisting of a few dozen members and friends of the branch, was noteworthily international in voice as in sentiment. Leo Melliet, a French refugee well known in scholastic circles, who had been Mayor and Minister of Justice in the Paris Commune, and was one of our earliest supporters in Glasgow, sang the 'Carmagnole' with such dramatic effect that we were roused to our feet and danced the chorus with him round the room. A German comrade, one of a small group of German glass-blowers who were members of the branch, sang a German workers' song, and a Russian Jew, a cigar-maker, sang a Yiddish revolutionary song which to our ears sounded as a weird sort of dirge. Between the songs we had several short speeches, including one from Morris, all pitched on an elated note, rejoicing in the hopes of the new civilisation which we were, we believed, bringing into birth.

Questions were put to Morris from all parts of the room which drew from him many characteristic sayings and stories. Towards the end of the evening Mrs. Neilson, a member of the Ruskin Society and our first woman recruit, surprised us with a little preceptorial address, in which she

gently rebuked us for the warlike tone of some of our Socialist utterances, and pressed upon us her view that only by the extension of the franchise to women could Socialism ever be obtained, as men were far too stupid and selfish ever to do away with a system that satisfied their fighting and predatory instincts.

This was, I believe, almost the first definitely anti-militarist note, and the first sound of the new women's agitation that any of us had yet heard. She amused us greatly by admonishing Morris quaintly against becoming conceited because of his genius and the hero-worship of his Socialist comrades! Morris in reply playfully assured her that were she acquaint with his experiences for but one week as editor of the *Commonweal*, or as a member of the Council of the League with Joe Lane and Frank Kitz as colleagues and monitors, she would have no anxiety lest his personal vanity should become unduly inflated. I cannot recollect whether he alluded to her remarks about the militarist spirit and women's enfranchisement—a tell-tale forgetfulness on my part. But I doubt if any of us realised the prophetic importance of the precepts thus pitched upon us by the first woman's utterance in our midst.

Thus the evening sped with us till midnight, when we sang 'Come, comrades, come,' acclaimed the 'Social Revolution,' and dispersed on our various ways home. One group of us insisted on convoying our guest to the hotel door, chorusing along the streets his own 'March of the Workers,' and feeling almost persuaded that we were destined to forgather some not far distant day at the barricades!

Traditions of similar fellowship gatherings with Morris exist in many other towns where branches of the League were founded. In every instance his personal association with the members appears to have given a richer colouring to their idealism and bestowed an imperishable fragrance on the sentiment of comradeship in the Socialist cause.

A halo of enthusiasm glows round his memory among the little groups of Socialist League members who still survive, such as rarely clings to the memory of any public man. I cannot think of any modern movement which inherits a more inspiring tradition of apostleship in this respect.

I have to go back to the lives (remote as they be in category as in time) of George Fox and William Tyndale, and to the legends of the great Celtic teachers, St. Columba, St. Cuthbert, St. Aidan (of Lindisfarne), and the Venerable Bede to find a like instance of a teacher or leader enshrining himself so perfectly in the affections and imagination of his friends and disciples. Indeed, I have often when recalling my own memories of Morris' visits, such as those described in the chapters 'A Red-Letter Day' and 'A Propaganda Outing,' and when listening to the recollections of some of our older comrades in Hammersmith, Norwich, Bristol, Leicester, Manchester, Edinburgh, and other towns, found the words in the story of the walk to Emmaus repeat themselves in my mind: 'Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?'

CHAPTER VI

FIRST VISIT TO KELMSCOTT HOUSE

FROM the outset to the end of its career the Socialist League was harassed with internal trouble. The members of the League had, as my readers will remember, split away from the Social Democratic Federation, chiefly on the ground that as revolutionary Socialists they could take no part in parliamentary agitation—at any rate not until Socialism had so far ripened in the country that Parliament could be made the means of precipitating the social revolution. Nevertheless, almost as soon as the League was formed a considerable section of its members in London began a campaign inside its ranks to get parliamentary action included among its avowed means of agitation. And again, no sooner was this body of disturbers finally compelled to withdraw from the League after a few years of incessant strife than an Anarchist faction began to afflict the League in a kindred way by stirring up dissension in order to get the League to declare itself an Anarchist organisation.

These troubles, particularly as the dissentients pursued their agitation with acerbity and recourse to intrigue and personal accusation, worried and vexed Morris. So much so, indeed, that eventually the irritation of it all greatly lessened his pleasure in working inside the League, and so led to the breaking up of the League altogether.

It was in the Whitsuntide of 1888, when the parliamentarian faction had attained a sufficient following in London to give their efforts to capture the League some

promise of success, that I went to London in order to attend the Annual Conference of the League, and visited Morris at his house in Hammersmith.

Several weeks before the Conference, Morris had become so much alarmed lest the dissentients should carry the day that he wrote me urging me to get the Glasgow branch to send me or some other delegate to the Conference to withstand the assault.

How paltry now seem the circumstances that caused Morris so much perturbation! How lamentable, one is inclined to exclaim, that the powers of one of the most richly gifted minds of modern days should have been tormented with such trivial and wholly distasteful wranglings! Yet too much has perhaps been made of that aspect of the matter. I am not at all convinced that Morris was really harmed by the experience. I think in some ways the intimate acquaintance which it gave him with the difficulties of political organisation and the recalcitrancy of some of his fellow-men, together with the sense of the helplessness of all his powers to meet the situation, produced a certain shade of work-a-day humility and patience in him that mellowed and enriched his character.

This is, I think, acknowledged by Mr. Mackail in his 'Life of Morris,' and while it is true that in the end these experiences contributed to his retirement from the active ranks of the movement, they were assuredly not the sole cause of his so doing. Besides, I am persuaded that in the six or eight years of his active apostleship he gave the best that was in him to give for the immediate propaganda of Socialism; and that had he continued to work in the movement as he had been doing he would have effected very little result, and might have suffered the loss of that high idealism which, happily as it was, he preserved to the end.

Nor let us forget that his experience of the faction wranglings in the movement (which are by no means so merely fractious or so sterilizing as they often appear to be) was one which has been ordained for all pioneers and re-

formers. Think of St. Paul's heart-breaking worries with the Churches which were the 'children of his own loins.'

To come, however, to my visit to Morris at Hammersmith.

I arrived in London on the Saturday afternoon. Morris had suggested to me that as he would not be at home till about six o'clock in the evening, I might, should I arrive earlier in the day, look in and have a glance at the Art Exhibition in the New Gallery. This I did, and as we shall afterwards see, it led me into an extraordinary experience.

On my arrival at Kelmscott House, Morris immediately came from his study on the ground floor, and after welcoming me cordially, took me up to my bedroom on one of the upper floors, and, leaving me there for a few moments, returned to introduce me to the 'inhabitants.' 'Here is our Scotchman, but he hasn't come in kilts nor brought bagpipes with him,' said he to Mrs. Morris, who was seated on the famous settle which stood out from the fireplace, doing some embroidery work. She rose and greeted me. I had, of course, heard of her great beauty, and had seen her portrait in some of the reproductions of Rossetti's pictures, but I confess I felt rather awed as she stood up tall before me, draped in one simple white gown which fell from her shoulders down to her feet. She looked a veritable Astarte—a being, as I thought, who did not quite belong to our common mortal mould. After greeting me she resumed her embroidery and listened with amusement to Morris' playful chaff.

'It's lucky for us,' continued Morris, 'that Glasier is not a stickler for the ancient customs of his country; for in my young days we were told that Scotchmen ate nothing but porridge, drank nothing but whisky, and sang one another to sleep with the Psalms of David.'

He pursued this playful vein for a little, giving Mrs. Morris an exaggerated account of some of his experiences in Scotland of the 'wild ways of the Picts.' Mrs. Morris

glanced at me occasionally, as if to assure me that she was not being taken in by his stories. 'He is quite naughty sometimes,' was her only remark. He then showed us an old book he had just bought, containing a diary, cooking receipts, and domestic accounts of some Squire's lady of the sixteenth century, and read with amusing comments some of the items.

While listening to him I was scanning with great interest the furnishings of the room. I had observed on entering its large size, its five windows looking over the Thames, and the simplicity and beauty of its furnishings. I experienced, as every visitor I am sure must have done, a delightful sense of garden-like freshness and bloom in the room. Noticing my interest in the things about me, Morris briefly described some of them. The handsome canopied settle on which Mrs. Morris was sitting was, he said, one of the earliest productions of the firm of Morris & Company, and the highly decorated wardrobe at the end of the room with painted figures was painted by Burne-Jones, and was his wedding gift to Morris.

Jenny, the eldest daughter, now came in, and we were served with a cup of tea, after which Morris took me downstairs to the library to have a smoke and talk about League business before supper.

Well do I remember the joy I felt as I sat down with him in that incomparable room. Destitute of furniture, except the big plain table and a few chairs, the floor of bare boards without any carpet, and bookshelves all round the room laden with all manner of books, new and old, and great antique tomes on the lower row, the place seemed to me a perfect realisation of a poet's and craftsman's den. The table itself was a joy for ever: a bare, white polished board, upon which were spread in fine disarray books, manuscripts, designs, a large ink-bowl with quill pens, tobacco pipes many, a tobacco jar filled with his favourite Latakia, drawing instruments, engraved blocks, and other delightful things. It was the sheer

antithesis of a housemaid's pride. Morris invited me to help myself to a pipe and tobacco, doing so himself by way of example. The pipes were of various kinds, cherry-wood, briar, and clay ; he himself preferred the briar.

So here I was with William Morris in the room where he had written so many of his famous poems, and worked out so many of his famous designs. How happy I was ! I felt an enchantment in the place. Morris talked of the morrow's Conference, informing me of the most recent tactics of the dissentients to carry their parliamentary resolution. He spoke without anger, but with a sense of depression.

'For the life of me,' he said, 'I can't see what possible object they can have in all this business of theirs. If they succeed (as of course they won't, this time at any rate, for we are assured of a majority), then I and our side will leave the League : and what then ? We have all the speakers that count, we have the *Commonweal*, and I have the money—more's the pity, maybe. They will have a few penniless branches, and no object or policy to justify their existence separate from the S.D.F. It is a sheer faction racket—just such as school-boys indulge in when they split into factions in order to fight each other for no rhyme or reason, save the love of the squabble ; all of which is perhaps natural enough as a means of self-development on the part of school-boys, as doubtless Herbert Spencer has taken the pains somewhere in his books to explain ; but it is rather disconcerting to find foolishness of this kind among grown-up and otherwise intelligent men, masquerading as service for the Socialist cause.'

He turned then to interest me in some of his books, and explained to me the history of the Dürer wood-engravings and other prints on the walls.

May Morris now arrived. I was greatly interested to meet her ; I had heard so much about her beauty and her activities in the movement. She resembled her

mother, I thought, more than her father in face, and was strikingly handsome. Her manner was quiet, and she was, I observed, inclined rather to ask questions or listen than to offer opinions of her own. She worked at a piece of embroidery as she sat with us.

Then came one or two friends, including Emery Walker, the well-known engraver, an intimate friend and secretary of the Hammersmith Branch of the League, Philip Webb, the architect, and Tarleton, a leading member of the branch, and we went into the dining-room for supper.

The dining-room—(the ceiling two floors high) lit up with large candles on brass or copper candlesticks (Morris used candles only in the house—he detested gas-light)—was magnificently grand in its glow of colour derived from the Morris Acanthus wall-paper, and a great gorgeous Persian carpet hung up like a canopy on one side of the room. Opposite, over the fireplace, was Rossetti's noble portrait of Mrs. Morris, and on one side of the large window crayon drawings by Rossetti of Jenny and May Morris. There were one or two other Rossetti crayon drawings on the wall. These, I think, were the only pictures in the room, and indeed there were few pictures on the walls, so far as I observed, anywhere in the house, other than the Dürer and a few other engravings and sketches in the entrance and library, for Morris did not 'believe in' making houses look like art galleries. The decorations of a room should be part of their needful architectural furnishings only.

So we seated ourselves on either side of the huge grey oaken dining-table, with Morris at the head, who saw to it that we partook liberally of the feast, while he enticed us into his happy mood with amusing chat and stories, addressing one or other of us in turn, so as to share the conversation round. Mrs. Morris rarely spoke, but Morris constantly referred his remarks to her with gentle courtesy and affection.

After supper Morris brought us back to the library, where we smoked and chatted till towards eleven o'clock, when the other guests departed. He sat with me about half an hour longer, then filling my hands with books to have something to read in my bedroom, he expressed his pleasure at my coming up to the Conference, and wished me a jolly night's rest.

The next morning—Whit-Sunday—I was wakened with the singing and trumpetings of steamer-loads of holiday seekers making for Kew Gardens, Hampton Court Palace, and Richmond, and the merry tumult of boating parties on the river. The sunshine was streaming across my bed and seemed laden with the festive din. This was my first Whit-Sunday experience in London, and I recall the impression of public joyousness in English life which the sound of this outside merriment made upon my Scottish mind. Morris himself was early astir, and came to see that I was all right and getting up. 'This is the morning of battle for us,' he said; 'miserable kind of battle though it be, it is imposed upon us, and we must not be late for the fray.'

Breakfast over, we were joined in the library by Walker, Tarleton, and several other comrades, delegates from the Hammersmith and neighbouring branches, and were soon, including May Morris, on our way, journeying by 'bus from the Broadway to Farringdon Road, where the head-quarters of the League then were, and where the Conference was held. It is not my intention to give an account of the Conference proceedings, the details of which have passed from my memory, and, in any case, now possess no interest. It is enough to say that the discussion, or rather wrangling, continued the whole day from 10.30 in the morning till nearly 10 o'clock at night, with a break at lunch-time and tea-time. Ernest Radford was, I remember, chairman, and among those present was Belfort Bax.

Almost every delegate present put in one or more

speeches. I cannot remember if Morris spoke in the debate, but when the parliamentarian resolution was eventually voted down about nine in the evening, he rose and made a deeply earnest appeal for unity and good-will all round. Mrs. Morris had expressed misgivings lest he should lose his temper at the Conference. He had promised her, however, that he would really behave himself and be a model 'good boy,' and he unquestionably kept his word—though, as he admitted, not without difficulty at times.

On our homeward journey he was in high spirits, partly as a reaction from the strain of the long day's wrangling and his self-repression, and partly because, as he said, 'the damned business was over at least for another year.' At supper table he requested May Morris and myself to bear testimony to Mrs. Morris that he had 'never once lost his temper or said a choleric word.' Mrs. Morris expressed herself as very glad of it.

Morris and the rest of our male selves sat up till midnight in the library, chatting over the events of the day and considering how to improve the propaganda work of the League. When the others had gone, Morris proposed that he should accompany me to my bedroom and read a bit of 'Huckleberry Finn' to me before going to sleep. 'It will get the nasty taste of to-day's squabbling out of our minds,' he said. Needless to say I welcomed the proposal gladly, not dreaming what a tempestuous experience it was going to bring upon me.

Closing the bedroom door, and seating himself by the large candle on the dressing-table, Morris began turning over the leaves of the book in order to select a chapter to begin with. Having fixed upon a page, he was about to start off reading when he said abruptly: 'By the way, I forgot to ask you about your visit to the New Gallery Exhibition yesterday afternoon. What did you think of the Burne-Jones' pictures?'

Now the fact was that in those days I knew very little

about modern paintings: and of Burne-Jones' paintings I had only seen one or two photographic reproductions, and knew really nothing about his style or principles of art. As it happened, the only one of his pictures in the New Gallery which I had particularly noticed was his 'Sea Nymph'—a picture which, I think, exceeds any other of his works in its challenging unconventionality. The sea is depicted in quite an archaic fashion—as a child might do, by mere curved interlacing bands of green colour, without any attempt to represent the actual form of water or wave. So I said in a blundering kind of way that I had observed this picture, but hardly knew what to say about it. It seemed to me as if the artist was trying to imitate some very early style of art rather than nature itself.

Then the heavens burst open, and lightning and thunder fell upon me. Hardly had I completed my sentence than Morris was on his feet, storming words upon me that shook the room. His eyes flamed as with actual fire, his shaggy mane rose like a burning crest, his whiskers and moustache bristled out like pine-needles.

I was seated on the edge of the bed, and was too astounded at first to comprehend what he said, or what had aroused his extraordinary passion. But I soon realised that I had been guilty of a mortal offence in what I had said about Burne-Jones' picture, though whether the offence lay wholly, or chiefly, in my seeming disparagement of Burne-Jones, or, as is quite likely, in the display of what he conceived to be my own and the popular ignorance about art, I do not to this day know.

He poured forth an amazing torrent of invective against the whole age. 'Art forsooth!' he cried, 'where the hell is it? Where the hell are the people who know or care a damn about it? This infernal civilisation has no capacity to understand either nature or art. People have no eyes to see, no ears to hear. The only thing they understand is how to enslave their fellows or be enslaved by them,

grubbing a life lower than that of the brutes. Children and savages have better wits than civilised mankind to-day. Look at your West End art—the damnable architecture, the damnable furniture, and the detestable dress of men and women. Look at the damnable callosity of the rich and educated who swill themselves in the rottenness of their wealth in the face of the horrible want and misery of the poor: and the poor who not only suffer the misery and insult of it, but grovel before the ruffians who souse them in it. They haven't the sense or pluck of rabbits. But we must "think about environment!"—oh, must we! Damn environment! Don't think if the devil pulls me by the ears I'm going to hell with him without kicking his shins.'

In this strain he continued for I don't know how long, flashing his wrath in my face, and moving round the room like a caged lion. For a time I felt as though I had in some way merited his terrible outburst, but I remember recovering my wits and sitting back in the bed, saying to myself 'Well, be he ever so much a great man of genius, he is really misbehaving badly towards me as his guest. I simply won't mind him—let him blaze away.' But I believe he was for the time being oblivious of me except that I was one of mankind. He was really in a sort of 'prophecy' against the scarlet woman of civilisation, and although I had been unwittingly the cause of his frenzy, I was not the object of it. Eventually there was a tap at the bedroom door, and it was opened slightly from the outside, and a voice expostulated: 'Really, the whole house is awakened. What is the matter? Do speak more quietly and let us get to sleep.'

This interruption acted as an exorcism. Morris quietened down as suddenly as he had flared up. He lifted 'Huckleberry Finn,' which he had tossed on the bed in the course of his fulmination, and making a turn round the room, he offered me his hand in a most friendly manner, remarking simply: 'I *have* been going it a bit

loudly—don't you think? I hope I have not upset you—I didn't mean to do that—and that you will have a sound sleep. Good night and good luck.'

Next morning he came again to waken me at seven o'clock, and was as cheery and charming as man could be. Later on in the drawing-room I prostrated myself before Mrs. Morris, pleading:

'Forgive *him*—I was really not the culprit, though it seems most unchivalrous on my part to say so.'

'Oh, I know it was not your fault, you don't need to tell me,' she said, and added half-reproachfully, looking at her husband: 'I knew when I heard him boasting last night of his good behaviour at the Conference that somebody would have to pay for it.' Morris looked a bit shamefaced, but affected not to acknowledge his delinquency, and appealed to me that we were merely having 'a little chat over art matters.' His daughter Jenny said 'Oh, you wicked, good father,' and put her arms round his neck.

And now observe the characteristic sequel. An excursion of the Hammersmith Branch was to take place that day to Box Hill. Morris had agreed to go; many of his personal friends were joining in the expedition, and he was set for one of the sides in a cricket match. On the previous evening he had explained about it to me, and had asked me to join the party; but as I had to be back in Scotland early on the Tuesday morning, and was bound to leave London by six in the evening at latest, I could not go. Whereupon he expressed his regret at having to leave me alone by myself, and invited me to make the freest use of his library and his writing material if I wished to do so, and alternatively offered me tickets for several Art Exhibitions in the town.

But he had decided to change his plans. On being reminded by his daughter May that it was time he was getting ready for the outing, he informed her that he was not going.

'But you promised to go, and they are all expecting you,' she urged.

'Yes, my dear, but man, as you know, is a self-willed animal, and I have decided 'tis my duty no less than my pleasure to stay here and play the host properly to my guest, who has come all the way from a foreign country at my request and goes back to-night.'

And stay for my sake he did, and gave up the whole day to entertaining me in all manner of ways. He took me for a row upon the river, and on our return after lunch he sat with me in the garden—a long orchard glade with lawn, fruit trees, and flowers behind the house—telling me of the change that had taken place in fruit and vegetable cultivation from the olden days, and giving me many curious instances of the feasting habits in the monasteries. Afterwards he sat smoking with me in the library, showing many of his rare book treasures, drawing my attention to the pages of illumination and typography, and reading to me one of the chapters in manuscript of his forthcoming first volume of prose romances, 'The House of the Wolfings,' upon which he was then engaged. He then settled himself down to tell me a number of droll experiences in connection with the business side of his work, and stories of Bell Scott, Swinburne, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and other of his more notable friends. Two of these I particularly recall. One was of Sir John Millais, and was intended as a sly dig at my Scottish vanity (Morris always believed, or pretended to believe, that I was intensely patriotic as a Scotsman, and liked to tease me about Scotland). Lady Millais, he explained, was a Perthshire woman, and was, he said, somewhat of a strict sabbatarian, and, he added slyly, 'much addicted to the economical virtues of your countrymen.' One Sunday Sir John was playing in the garden with the children, when he heard Lady Millais' voice from one of the windows call 'John, John!' 'What is it, my dear?' asked he. The reply came, 'If you *will* break the Sabbath, you might as well *be doing something useful*,

and come in and paint.' Morris chuckled as he emphasised the words. The other story was of Holman Hunt, who spent several years out in Palestine getting local colour for his Scriptural paintings. Hunt, Morris said, knew the Arabic tongue well, but for reasons of personal safety pretended not to know it, in order to hear the Mussulmans talk freely among themselves. One day, as he was encamped by the Dead Sea, painting in the mountain landscape of his picture 'The Scapegoat,' a number of Arabs gathered round him and watched him paint with great surprise and curiosity—for painting, or the making of images of 'anything in the Heavens above or the Earth beneath,' is strictly forbidden in the Mohammedan religion. They could not at all understand the purpose of Hunt's sitting there for hours, painting bit by bit the mountains beyond, and offered each other all manner of extraordinary explanations of the artist's conduct. At last one of them, with an air of triumph, exclaimed 'I understand it, I understand it! He has discovered that there is gold in the rocks, and he is putting the rocks into that frame *so that when he takes it to England he may extract the gold out of them*!' This quaint explanation (which Morris added had perhaps more truth in it than they were aware of!) was acclaimed delightedly by the Arabs.

One of his stories about his business affairs concerned a former manager of the firm, Warington Taylor, who was, Morris said, a strangely silent and reserved man. Until this manager came Morris had never, so he said, understood whether the business was paying its way or not; but this man every year at Christmas time gave him a statement of accounts, which always included a sort of 'budget,' or of what Morris' own outlays during the next year ought to be, even to quite personal details—such as so much for wine, so much for books, for benevolence, and so on. Morris never knew whether the manager was at all inclined favourably towards Socialism, but when he died suddenly a curious thing came to light. Morris had to examine

some of the papers left in the manager's private desk, and among them noticed the draft of an estimate which he (the manager) had sent for some proposed decorations in a church. Morris had always wondered why the decorations had never been ordered from his firm, especially as the Vicar of the church was a personal friend of his own, so he now scanned the estimate with some curiosity to see if there was any very obvious overcharge in it. What was his surprise to find in the estimate, underneath the items: 'To providing a silk and gold altar cloth, so much,' the proviso, written in the manager's own hand:

'*Note.*—In consideration of the fact that the above item is a wholly unnecessary and inexcusable extravagance at a time when thousands of poor people in this so-called Christian country are in want of food—additional charge to that set forth above, ten pounds.'

'That,' said Morris, 'at once explained our not getting the order; but I was more than delighted that the chap had done it. You see,' he added with a chuckle, 'I had succeeded in making the dear old chap something of a Socialist after all!'

In this way the afternoon passed, Morris bestowing his whole attention upon me. I felt deeply touched to think how generously eager he was to make happy in every way my remembrance of my visit. When eventually I had to leave for my train, he insisted on stuffing my pockets inside and out with cigars and nuts and fruits; he wanted to give me a flask of whisky or brandy 'in case of accidents,' and that I should accept the loan of a rug for my night journey. He walked with me down to the Broadway and saw me off at the underground station, loading me with magazines from the bookstall, and assuring me that my visit had been a joy to him.

Thus ended my first visit to Kelmscott House, and aglow with the delight of it I returned as happy as though I had been endowed with the richest estate in the land.

CHAPTER VII

A PICNIC ON THE THAMES

ALTHOUGH denied the enjoyment of the holiday excursion to Box Hill with Morris and our Hammersmith comrades, as stated in the foregoing chapter, I was fortunate in having a more privileged outing with him on another occasion. Holiday expeditions were one of Morris' favourite enjoyments. He was remarkably fond of any kind of outdoor recreation which he could share with his friends; and considering his extraordinary zest for work and how constantly busy was his whole life, it is surprising how much pastime and holidaying he succeeded in snatching from the hours and days as they passed. He seemed ever ready for some diversion or adventure; and even during the most strenuous period of his Socialist agitation we have constant glimpses in his letters of his relaxing himself in some outing or amusement.

The occasion I am about to speak of was in the summer, I think, of 1889, when I spent a few days at Kelmscott House. Morris had written me, urging me to come on the Friday evening, or at latest on the Saturday morning, in order to join in a picnic trip on the river. 'Come on Saturday if you can,' he wrote, 'and you may have another opportunity of showing your disgust at the scenery of the pock-puddings of the South'—an allusion to my having spoken disparagingly of the scenery of the Home Counties in retaliation for his having said that there were 'no rivers in Scotland, only some mountain torrents.'

I arrived at the Mall in time for breakfast on the Saturday morning, and Morris was as gleesome as a schoolboy at the prospect of the day's expedition. About ten o'clock Ernest Radford came along and announced that the boat was ready for us at the little water-gate directly in front of the house.

'And we are ready for it, don't you think?' Morris chuckled, pointing to the heap of provisions gathered on the table. 'Now for a fair divide of the load.'

Our party consisted of Radford, Emery Walker, Jenny Morris, Morris, and myself. We looked a miniature commissariat corps as we filed out of the house down to the jetty! Morris, who insisted on carrying the bulkiest packages himself, seemed expanded to twice his usual dimensions. His jacket pockets bulged out hugely with two long bottles of wine, and a satchel stowed with eatables was slung over his shoulder. Each of us carried a package of some sort, and I feel sure the youngsters who watched our embarkation fancied we were going on a week's voyage at least!

Radford and Morris took the oars; Morris divesting himself of his coat, so warm and breezeless was the morning. The tide was with us, and our little craft sped up the river like an arrow. Morris was brimful of chat about the scenery on the banks, and entertained us with all manner of allusions to incidents and persons associated with the various parts of the river. He wanted us to sing, suggesting some old seafaring 'chanties,' and as none of us seemed in a vocal mood, he hummed rhymes to himself as he swung his oars.

Arriving at a point of the river near Richmond which had been fixed upon as the place of disembarkation, the boat was drawn in to the bank and duly made fast. We unloaded our provisions on the grassy slope, and Morris at once took upon himself the duties of Master of Ceremonies. He insisted on doing everything himself—opening the packages, laying out the plates, knives and forks, and

glasses, and uncorking the wine bottles. What a feast was spread before us on the white linen napkins on the grass !—rolls of bread and pats of butter, veal-and-ham pies, boiled eggs, nuts, pears, and a delectable salad compounded by his own hands, three bottles of wine, and I know not what else. It seemed enough for a company of twenty, yet not many basketfuls were left over when we had had our will with them. And all the time Morris kept our fancy on the wing with stories and curious lore, and droll comments on the comestibles he had laid before us. He took delight in gently teasing his daughter Jenny, ascribing imaginary sayings to her as the repository of the wisdom and foibles of her sex ; and in speaking to me, or of me, as the fellow-countryman and friend of 'William Wallace wight,' John Knox, Rob Roy, or other Scottish celebrities, displaying, I confess, an acquaintance with incidents and characters in Scottish history and Walter Scott's novels well beyond my range.

Our lunch over, we were about to gather up the unbroken remainder of the feast, when Morris, noticing a group of children lingering near by and eyeing our proceedings enviously, invited them to the freedom of our table, an invitation which they accepted with manifest surprise and delight.

We then went up Richmond Hill. Morris had promised me that I should see from the Hill one of the most beautiful landscape views of its kind anywhere in England or elsewhere to be seen, and he observed me with quite boyish expectation as I looked round the beautiful sweep of the river and the wonderful curves of spreading meadow and woodland fading away into the luxurious haze of the afternoon. In a perverse way I affected to be quite unimpressed by the scene, and his disappointment was so evident that I immediately repented myself of my affectation and acknowledged the great beauty of it. We lolled for an hour or more on the bank of the hill, Morris and Radford recalling snatches of poetry relating to the country within

view, and contrasting passages from the Greek poets with those of our English poets on landscape themes. They spoke also about pictures of the scene by Turner, Constable, Linnell, and other artists, Morris expressing himself emphatically, as was his wont, for or against them, but always with some reason annexed which showed how keen was his discernment of their respective qualities and how far from mere whim was his judgment of them.

Some arrangement being made for the return of the boat which I cannot recall, we ourselves returned by way of Richmond and Kew, Morris taking a pleasure in buying 'Maids of Honour' (a famed delicacy of the place) for Jenny. His devotion to her all the way was beautiful to see. We rambled a good deal among the quainter parts of Kew, and eventually took the train home about eight o'clock in the evening.

In the adjoining compartment of the railway carriage (the compartments were partitioned only half-way up) there was a crowd of boys, who made a great row, singing schoolboy catches and thumping with sticks on the floor and partition. Morris at once caught up the spirit of their frolic, and much to Jenny's disapproval (which was, I suspect, assumed as part of her rôle, for the occasion, of a well-bred daughter with an obstreperous father) thumped back to them through the partition and joined in their singing, keeping time with them by pounding his feet on the floor.

At Kelmscott House an interesting company gathered in the library that night. Philip Webb, Carruthers, Bernard Shaw, Sydney Olivier, Walter Crane and Andreas Scheu, Walker and Radford. I do not remember if the gathering was a chance one, or if there was some project under consideration. But not elsewhere in all the land I fancy was there such wonderful conversation let loose between four walls that evening.

CHAPTER VIII

A RED-LETTER DAY

SUNDAY, March 25, 1888, was a memorable day for our Socialist League group in Glasgow. Then it was that Morris, who had come on one of his lecturing visits, spent a whole day long with us in our branch rooms, giving us such a full feast, so to speak, of himself, his Socialism, and his outlook on life, that the occasion has remained for myself and many who were present one of our most delightful memories of the Socialist movement. I must, therefore, try to make some record of it, though I cannot hope to do more than convey in outline the impression which the day's experience had upon our minds, for so much of the pleasure and inspiration which we derived from it depended on the intense glow of Morris' personality, on his spoken words, and on his striking modes of expression and manner, which my pen cannot reproduce.

Our gathering consisted of about a couple of dozen of the active workers in the branch, together with a few outside sympathisers. Among the latter were D. M. (now Sir Daniel) Stevenson and his brother R. A. M. Stevenson, the artist, J. P. Macgillivray, sculptor, Craibe Angus, art dealer, W. R. M. Thomson, patent agent, Dr. Dyer, late Principal of an engineering college in Japan, and William Jolly, H.M. Inspector of Schools.

It was a cold, wettish, wintry morning, and the occasional flakes of snow boded ill for our public meeting in the evening. Nevertheless, when we were all gathered together about

10.30 in the morning in the branch room with a blazing fire, cheerfulness filled the place. A long table ran the length of the room, at the head of which Morris sat under the window. Our conversation began at once. We appointed no chairman, but Mavor offered our guest a few words of welcome on behalf of the meeting, and invited him to speak. Whereupon Morris rose and gave a short address on the principles of the Socialist League, and on its doings in London, particularly with reference to the Free Speech troubles which were then exciting political interest. This done, Morris invited those present to ply him with questions as freely as they wished, either on the matter of his address or on any aspect of Socialism or the movement. 'I shall,' he said, 'most gladly answer any question put to me, if I can; if I cannot, I hope some other of our comrades will try his hand at it. But I also want you, on your part, to tell me something about the movement in Scotland: what your special difficulties are in getting people to accept Socialism; and what your ideas are about how to push the movement ahead.'

There was no lack of questions. At first the topics bore closely on Socialism—the policy of the League, and the more puzzling objections to Socialism which Socialists had to encounter in those days—but soon the scope of enquiry broadened out into the whole field of industry, politics, history, art, and literature. Whatever the nature of the question, Morris replied with unfailing willingness, even when, as in some instances, the question was of a directly personal nature, such as 'Why don't you carry out your Socialist principles in connection with your own business?' 'Why does the firm of Morris & Co. object to advertise its manufactures?' 'Do you dress unconventionally as you do in a blue-serge suit and discard white linen on principle as a Socialist or as a craftsman, or simply as a matter of personal taste?'—these latter questions coming from the visitors.

For fully two hours Morris submitted himself to this

interrogation with the utmost good-nature; constantly refilling and lighting his pipe and occasionally taking a few puffs from it. At times he would rise from his seat and bestride himself in front of the fireplace, restlessly, as was his custom, balancing himself now on one foot, now on the other. It were vain my attempting to give even the substance of what was in fact a two hours' discourse. Nor can I, as I have said, attempt to convey any adequate impression of the richness of ideas, the variety of illustrations from history and his own experiences, the amusing sallies, and occasional fiery outbursts against existing conditions of civilisation which outpoured in his replies. How unfailingly humane and generous were all his views of life! how idealistic his hopes of what Society might be, and yet how rightdown practical were all his references to the actual means and measures of changing the present system!

As an example of how closely he tackled the argumentative side of questions, I might instance his reply to the question 'Does not revolutionary Socialism involve Anarchism?' It was one of the longest of his replies, and the subject was one concerning which he felt strongly. I give as nearly as I can recall the actual words he used.

'I call myself a revolutionary Socialist,' said Morris, 'because I aim at a complete revolution in social conditions. I do not aim at reforming the present system, but at abolishing it; and I aim, therefore, not at reforms, either on their own account, or as a means of bringing about Socialism as the eventual outcome of a series of palliations and modifications of Capitalistic society:—I aim at bringing about Socialism itself right away, or, rather, as soon as we can get the people to desire and will to have it. But, mark you again, what I aim at is Socialism or Communism, not Anarchism. Anarchism and Communism, notwithstanding our friend Kropotkin, are incompatible in principle. Anarchism means, as I understand it, the doing away with, and doing without, laws and rules of all kinds, and in each person being allowed to do just as he pleases. I don't

want people to do just as they please ; I want them to consider and act for the good of their fellows—for the commonweal in fact. Now what constitutes the commonweal, or common notion of what is for the common good, will and always must be expressed in the form of laws of some kind—either political laws, instituted by the citizens in public assembly, as of old by folk-moot, or if you will by real councils or parliaments of the people, or by social customs growing up from the experience of Society. The fact that at present many or the majority of laws and customs are bad, does not mean that we can do without good laws or good customs. When I think of my own work and duties as a citizen, a neighbour or friend, a workman or an artist, I simply cannot think of myself as behaving or doing right if I shut out from my mind the knowledge I possess of social customs or decrees concerning what is right-doing or wrong-doing. I am not going to quibble over the question as to the difference between laws and customs. I don't want either laws or customs to be too rigid, and certainly not oppressive at all. Whenever they so become, then I become a rebel against them, as I am against many of the laws and customs to-day. But I don't think a Socialist community will require many governmental laws ; though each citizen will require to conform as far as possible to the general understanding of how we are to live and work harmoniously together. But, frankly and flatly, I reckon customs, if they are bad customs, to be always more oppressive and difficult to get rid of than political laws. If you violate political laws you have the policeman and the soldiers, maybe, against you, but when you violate social customs you have the whole of the community against you. In the one case you may be regarded as a criminal and fined, imprisoned, or even put to death, any of which contingencies is bad enough no doubt ; but in the other case you are regarded as a churl, a kill-joy, a bigot, a humbug, and unless you are a thick-skinned wretch, or are sustained by a powerful sense of conscience

and duty, as you can only be on really very big matters, your life may be made wholly tasteless and intolerable both to you and your friends. And what is life worth then? In a word then, I tell you I am not an anarchist, and I had as lief join the White Rose Society, or the so-called "Liberty and Property Defence League," as join an anarchist organisation.'

When delivering this exposition of his views on anarchism Morris walked about the floor, and spoke as in the heat of debate. It was a subject which, as has already been said, caused him no end of bother at that period, as there was already growing up in the League a strong anarchist faction—a faction which eventually succeeded, in fact, in driving Morris from the editorship of the *Commonweal*, and splitting and destroying the Socialist League.

The multitude of the topics dealt with by him in his replies was, I have said, remarkable. Some idea of their range and variety may be gathered from the following synopsis which I noted at the time:—Did he believe in 'Scientific' as opposed to 'Utopian' Socialism? Did he accept the Marxist or the Jevonian theory of value? What was the real point of difference between him and Mr. Hyndman? and were they still personal friends? Did he regard the Fabians as being genuine Socialists? Did he not think that the Socialist agitation would strengthen reaction, by detaching working men from the Liberal Party and frightening middle-class people into the Tory ranks? Was it consistent for Socialists to ally themselves, as they virtually were doing, with the Irish Party, seeing the latter sought to establish Peasant Proprietorship, which would make Land Nationalisation more difficult? Did he not think the Henry George Single Tax proposal an adequate solution of the economic problem? Did he think Trade Unionism was a help towards Socialism? Was it consistent for Socialists to be capitalists? Why did he not consider St. Paul's Cathedral beautiful? Was it true that he pre-

ferred Chaucer to Shakespeare, and did not admire Milton? What did he think of Michael Angelo? Was Swinburne likely to become a Socialist? Was Burne-Jones a Socialist? And (inevitably) how did Robert Burns rank as a poet?

This last question afforded Morris an opportunity of breaking from the fetters of the inquisition. 'Don't you know,' he replied adroitly, 'that I am constitutionally incapable of giving an opinion on your national bard? So at least a Scotch friend of mine, and one of the best linguists and best informed literary men I know of, tells me. No man, he says, but a Scotchman can really understand and appreciate Burns, and I have the misfortune not to be a Scotchman, but a pock-pudding Englishman. He tells me that were I a Scotchman and able to appreciate the real greatness of Burns' genius, I should set him above Shakespeare, Dante, Virgil, and Homer. But it is perhaps just as well, after all, don't you think, that I am not a Scotchman, for in that case I should not have been William Morris, and should not have had the pleasure of meeting you to-day, and inflicting a two hours' Socialist sermon on you.'

As the day advanced the weather had not improved. A cold, drizzling sleet was falling, and the sky had become quite dusk. It was now after one o'clock, and most of those present were already late for their dinner or lunch. To our delight, Morris announced that he would willingly spend the afternoon with us, and we decided to adjourn the meeting, on the understanding that those who cared to do so, or were able to do so, should return at 2.30. Whereupon, our gathering broke up, and I took Morris off to lunch at a restaurant—MacArthur's in the Trongate, the solitary dining establishment then open in Glasgow on Sundays.

When we returned to the rooms, a regular snowstorm had begun, and only some seven or eight of the branch members had returned to join our afternoon's symposium. So dark was it that we had to light the gas. But although

all was dark and wild without, we were bright and merry within.

Morris was evidently pleased to find himself in a smaller company, and especially, so I thought, on discovering that those present belonged to the working class. He seemed, curiously enough, as I then and on many other occasions noted, when in the company of strangers, to feel more at home and freer in his manner when among working men than when among men of his own class. He chatted in a chummy way with those around him, asking about their employment, and surprising us all by his acquaintance with the practical skill and usages of their crafts. He told amusing stories of his experiences in speaking at meetings in workmen's clubs in London—'sometimes to less than a dozen listeners after travelling right across London, and spending a whole evening on the job.'

'But now,' he said, 'you asked me this morning why I became a Socialist; suppose I in turn ask some of you chaps to tell me what brought you to Socialism? I confess I cannot help wondering, when I find myself in a group of comrades, why they particularly have heard the word gladly while the mass of their fellows have turned from it with deaf ears.'

Rather shyly one or two of us recounted, as best we could, the circumstances that had led us to leave the accustomed paths of politics. Our replies seemed almost as though we were each reciting the same story by rote. We had all, it appeared, from our boyhood days felt, without knowing why, the injustice of the existing system of leisure and riches on the one hand, and hard toil and poverty on the other. Our reading—and in most instances Burns and Shelley, Carlyle and Ruskin were among the authors mentioned—had further aroused our minds on the subject. Then had come the Highland Crofters' revolt, and Henry George's 'Progress and Poverty' and 'Land for the People' agitation. Lord Beaconsfield's 'Sybil,' Kingsley's 'Alton Locke,' Mrs Lynn Linton's 'Joshua Davidson,' and Victor

Hugo's 'Les Misérables' were also mentioned among the books that had proved stepping-stones out of the old ways of thought.

Morris expressed surprise that none of us appeared to have read More's 'Utopia' or any writings of the more definite pre-Marxian Socialist thinkers—Robert Owen, St. Simon, Fourier, Louis Blanc, and the like. 'As for Marx,' he said, 'his writings were, of course, hardly known in this country outside the foreign revolutionary groups in London until Hyndman drew attention to them. Besides, until a couple of years or so ago, even his "Capital" was published only in German and French, and is of such an analytical character that it had practically no influence in creating Socialist thought in this country. I am not, however, so much surprised to find down here in Scotland that you working chaps apparently found each your own way to Socialism without even being in contact, as we in London were, with foreign revolutionary influences, as that you have all come the same road, so to speak, and that road has simply been the road of the reading and political experience common to the more thoughtful of the Scotch working class generally. Our comrade, the Rev. Dr. Glasse of Edinburgh, tells me practically the same thing. It looks as though one and all of you have been what is called "born" Socialists—Socialists, that is to say, by nature or temperament to begin with—and that, I suppose, is true of the majority of us who are as yet in the Socialist ranks, especially those who feel impelled to become apostles of the Cause.'

'The truth is,' Morris added, 'that there has always been a making of Socialists, and a making of Society towards Socialism, going on since human history began. I have recently been looking a good deal into the literature of the Middle Ages and earlier periods of European history, and have been struck with the definiteness of Socialist feeling, and even Socialist customs, among the people and monkish sects of those days. I am writing some chapters for *Com-*

monweal on the Revolt of Ghent, and on John Ball and the Peasants' Revolt in England in Richard II's day, in which I hope to make this better understood in the movement.'

This theme seemed to call his thoughts back to olden times, and he told us many stories and sayings illustrative of the Socialist ideas and customs of bygone days. He repeated to us the verses 'Mine and Thine' translated by him from the Flemish of the fourteenth century, which were afterwards published in the *Commonweal* and in his 'Poems by the Way.' One of the stories which he told with great relish was of two monks in the early Church who were discussing the causes of enmity and war amongst mankind. 'It is all owing to private property,' said one of the two monks. 'But what is private property?' asked the other. His companion explained to him that private property was any kind of thing which one person alleged belonged to himself, and which no one else had any right to, but there was always someone else who would be claiming possession of it, and thus the two claimants would fall fighting each other for it. 'Dost thou now understand, brother?' asked the first monk. 'Nay, brother, I do not,' replied the other. 'Well, let me show thee. It is this way: Thou shalt say to me that the missal which is in thine hand is thine, and I shall say "Nay, brother, it is mine," and shall seek to take it from thee. Thereupon thou must refuse to let me take it: and forthwith thou and I shall strive against each other for it. Now, brother, let us begin. I now say to thee that the missal which is in thine hand is mine, and therefore thou must give it to me.' Whereupon the other monk, instead of refusing him the missal and withholding it, replied 'Why, brother, if the missal be thine, surely thou shalt have it,' and so saying he yielded up the missal ungrudgingly. And thus the good monk's object-lesson all came to naught.

Morris chuckled gleefully in telling this story. He then suggested that we should have some singing; he wanted, he said, to hear some of our old Scottish songs.

Luckily two of our comrades were good singers. James Thomson (a great-grandson of the poet Burns), who had a delightfully pure tenor voice, sang Burns' 'I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen' and 'Mary Morrison.' McKechnie, a young West-Highlander with a capital baritone range and an endless repertory, sang one or two Gaelic songs and several Scottish humorous songs, including 'The barrin' o' the door,' 'The wee Cooper o' Fife,' and 'Phairshon swore a feud.' Morris was greatly taken with McKechnie's singing, and joined with us in the choruses. McKechnie then sang Greave's Irish song 'Ballyhooly,' heard by us for the first time.

Sung as it was with great Celtic gusto, the song fairly captivated Morris, and again and again he hummed over the rollicking refrain 'And they call it lemonade in Ballyhooly!' A month or two later, when I visited him in London, he chanted snatches of the song as I sat with him while he was designing some tapestry piece in the library.

It was now evening. The outside world was dark and deep in snow, and our hopes of having a crowded meeting at the evening lecture had completely vanished. There was only just time for a cup of tea, which was served in the rooms, before going to the meeting. We then linked hands together and sang 'Auld Lang Syne,' hailed the coming of the revolution and International Socialism, and marched forth on our tramp through the ankle-deep snow to the Waterloo Hall.

At the hall we had to distribute among us the details of manning the pay-box, selling literature, and acting as stewards. To our pleasant surprise, notwithstanding the snowstorm, quite a good audience turned up for the lecture, at least 500—a couple of hundred more would have crowded the hall. The subject of the lecture was 'Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century,' which, needless to say, Morris wrought into a magnificent vindication of the aims and hopes of Socialism. He was in excellent trim on the plat-

form, notwithstanding his exhausting all-day-long session with us in the rooms, and he agreed without a grumble after the lecture to return with us to the rooms for a final rally with the comrades.

And thus ended our memorable day with Morris 'all to ourselves' in Glasgow. Walking home at midnight (for it was nigh midnight by the time one or two of us had seen Morris back to his hotel), a workman comrade then attending the university, who knew more of Morris' writings than any other of us then did, said to me with great earnestness, as he bid me good-night: 'This is the greatest day of my life, and I can never hope to see the like again. I no longer doubt the possibility of an earthly Paradise. I feel as if Balder the Beautiful were become alive again and had been with us to-day. If one can speak of a God amongst men, we can so speak of William Morris as he has been with us this day in Glasgow.'

NOTE.—In *Commonweal*, June 5, 1888, Morris gave an account of his Scottish tour on this occasion. The tour included the following itinerary: Thursday (Mar. 21), Kilmarnock; Friday, Edinburgh; Saturday, West Calder; Sunday, Glasgow; Monday, Edinburgh again; Tuesday, Dundee; and Wednesday, Aberdeen. Here is his note on his Glasgow visit:—

'On Sunday I went to Glasgow, and here I had every reason to damn "the nature of things" as Porson did when he hit his head against the door-post; for it came on to snow at about one o'clock and snowed to the time of the meeting harder than I ever saw it snow, so that by 7.30 Glasgow streets were more than ankle-deep in half-frozen slush, and I made up my mind to an audience of fifty in a big hall; however, it was not so bad as that, for it mustered over 500, who passed *nem. con.* a resolution in favour of Socialism. Owing to the weather, our comrades could not attempt the preliminary open-air meetings which they had intended to do; so I passed the day with them in their rooms in John St. very much to my own pleasure, as without flattery, they were, as I have always found them, hearty good fellows and thorough Socialists.'

CHAPTER IX

A PROPAGANDA OUTING

A FEW of us in Glasgow were accustomed on Saturday afternoons during the summer months to go to some neighbouring town or village, there to spread our 'glad tidings.' Learning of this on the occasion of one of his visits to Scotland, when he lectured at Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow, Hamilton, and Paisley, Morris at once volunteered to join our expedition in the afternoon. The place chosen for our outing was Coatbridge, one of the chief and most dismal iron-smelting, engineering, and coal-mining towns in Scotland. There were six of us in all, including Morris, and we took the train from the Buchanan Street Station about three o'clock.

Morris was in high spirits, and exhibited to the full that rare combination of boyishness and masterfulness, jollity, seriousness, and explosiveness that made so attractive his character and companionship. We had an amusing experience at the outset of our journey. Among our group was a builder's carpenter, who, though enrolled as a member of the League, rarely turned up except when Morris, Kropotkin, Edward Carpenter, or some other notable person was on the scene. On this occasion, hearing that Morris was to be with us, he decided to form one of the company. Unfortunately, it being 'Pay Saturday,' he had spent some of his earnings in a public-house, and was in an obviously disordered condition. As soon as we were planted in our seats he addressed Morris, *sans cérémonie*.

'I always like to come and hear you and the other bigwigs of the movement,' he said; 'but I can't be bothered listening to the small fry. But I don't look on you as a great orator—you don't mind me telling you that? As a speaker you are not in the same boat with John Burns. But you have a mighty sight more in your head than he has. I haven't read any of your poetry, but I expect it's uncommonly good. A man with a head like yours is bound to have great ideas in it. I'm a bit of a phrenologist, you see. Have you ever read Dr. George Combe's works?'

Morris, who listened to the carpenter's familiarities with amusement, replied that he had not.

'Then, sir, you've missed a treat. Combe was one of the greatest thinkers this country has produced. He beats your Bacon, Locke, and Berkeley altogether.'

Having delivered this judgment, the carpenter relapsed into a dozing condition in his corner. A few minutes later, observing through the carriage window the glowing cupola of the steel works and blast-furnaces of the Parkhead Forge, Morris remarked that the district reminded him of Middlesbrough, and said something about Sir Lothian Bell, the great ironmaster of that neighbourhood. At the mention of Sir Lothian Bell's name, our carpenter friend pricked up his ears.

'Sir Lothian Bell—Sir Lothian Bell,' he muttered, as if dimly recalling the name. Then after a pause, and looking hard at Morris, he asked, 'What do you know about Sir Lothian Bell?'

'Why,' replied Morris, 'I just happen to know a little about him. You see I worked for him once.'

The carpenter sat up astounded. 'What!' he exclaimed. 'You mean to say you have worked for Sir Lothian Bell? I don't believe it.'

'Well, believe it or not, my friend, it is a fact none the less,' said Morris, tickled at the man's absurdity. Scrutinising Morris' face to discover if he was in some way fooling him, the carpenter repeated his declaration: 'I don't believe it.'

'But why should you not believe it?' asked Morris, ignoring the incivility of the denial. 'You see, I am a workman, at any rate in my own way, though doubtless you do not reckon us artist sort of chaps as workmen. The truth is, I decorated Sir Lothian Bell's house for him. And I worked precious hard, too, I can tell you, at some parts of the job, as I think you would have allowed had you seen me at it, lathered from top to toe in plaster and paint.'

'You really mean to say you worked in Sir Lothian Bell's house!' cried the carpenter now fairly excited.

'I assure you I did, my friend,' replied Morris good-humouredly, but surprised at the carpenter's excitement.

'Well, I never! But do you really mean it?—you're not kidding me?'

'Of course not—why should I?'

'Well, that beats everything!' shouted the carpenter. 'Why,' he said, with almost solemn emphasis, '*I worked at Sir Lothian Bell's house myself!*'

'You did?' exclaimed Morris. 'Why, it's quite a remarkable coincidence, isn't it? You and I may therefore call ourselves workmates as well as comrades. Let us shake hands on it.'

The carpenter rather grudgingly extended his hand, and, looking with dull suspicion at Morris, kept muttering to himself: 'Well, I never—well, I never! But I only half believe it,'—until he again dozed over in his corner. Later on our two miles' walk sobered him up, but conscious that he had been making rather a fool of himself he kept silent for the remainder of the day.

Morris was now about to display himself in one of his explosive moods. Our train instead of stopping at Coatbridge bowled ahead to the next station, Whifflets, about two miles farther on. We had, it appeared, boarded the wrong train at Glasgow. The mistake was mine; for noticing the name 'Airdrie' on the destination board, I had assumed that, as the train was a stopping train, it would stop at Coatbridge, as was customary with the Airdrie

trains. I did not, at the moment, acquaint Morris with our misadventure, hoping that at Whifflets we might get a train back to Coatbridge with little or no delay. On our disembarking I spoke to the guard, complaining that no notice had been put up to warn passengers that the train would not stop at Coatbridge. Morris, who was waiting with our comrades a little farther up the platform, observing that I was having some little altercation with the guard, at once came along to enquire what was the matter. I told him, of course, what had happened, and that we should likely have to walk back two miles.

'Oh, that's it!' exclaimed Morris, flaring up instantly into an amazing state of indignation. 'I don't mind having to walk the two miles, but I do mind that these damned railway companies should treat the public in the shabby way they do. It's all because they won't pay wages to have sufficient men to look after the convenience of the public.' And thereupon he broke out into a terrific diatribe against railway companies in general, denouncing them as 'mean, lousy thieves and scoundrels,' saying all manner of dreadful things against them. He directed his abuse on the guard, who, standing with flag and whistle in hand, was too astounded at the wonderful apparition and infuriation of the blue-garmented sun-god or sea-god before him to say or do anything. I tried to persuade Morris to come away, but he would not. Meanwhile the passengers, hearing the disturbance on the platform, were looking out of the windows with mingled amusement and amaze. Thoroughly ashamed of my illustrious companion's misbehaviour, I left him in the midst of his expostulation, and, joining the rest of our company, we made over the footbridge to the other platform, where we ascertained that there would be no train back to Coatbridge until two hours later.

The train having moved off, Morris crossed over the bridge and came leisurely sauntering towards us, humming contentedly some tune to himself. He was already a transformed being. Observing that we all looked rather

disconcerted, he asked if 'anything else was wrong.' I replied no, but ventured to upbraid him gently for his violent behaviour, pointing out that the guard was not in any way to blame either for the misdoings of railway companies or for our present misadventure.

'Of course not,' replied Morris, cheerfully. 'But we've got to blow up someone, don't you know. If we don't, nothing will be done to remedy matters. I hope, however, the guard didn't think I was bull-ragging him. Of course he didn't—he looked quite a sensible chap. Now, shan't we have a refreshment, and get our shanks on the road?' He looked so imperturbably good-humoured that it was incredible that only a minute before he had been a blazing pillar of Olympian wrath. It was as that instant change from storm to sunshine which never ceases to astonish us in the moods of children.

Proceeding on our way back to Coatbridge along the dry, coal-dusty road, with its dreary stretches of 'colliers' rows,' Morris' interest in everything he saw never flagged. He plied us with questions about the miners, their politics, their wages, and mode of spending their leisure. He noted (with many an imprecation) the effects of the ironworks on vegetation, and stopped occasionally to note the wayside flowers struggling for life here and there among the grimy hedgerows; and every now and then quoted some old saying, or told some amusing story illustrative of the subject on hand.

When we got to Coatbridge we had no little difficulty in deciding where we should hold our meeting. The police were exceedingly hostile to any sort of open-air meetings, religious or political, in the town, because of the frequent rows bordering on riots which they occasioned between the Orangemen and Roman Catholics, who formed a large part of the population. The street corners adjacent to public-houses, where the workmen were mostly congregated, were, I knew from past experience, forbidden us; and the few vacant pieces of ground elsewhere discernible gave

no promise of our getting an audience. Eventually we fixed on a sort of cinder-heap underneath the Gartsherrie blast furnaces, near, I think, to where the present fountain stands. We borrowed a chair from a neighbouring cottage, spread out our *Commonweals* and tracts as showily as we could, and ranged ourselves round so as to make ourselves look as big a crowd as possible. (How familiar all these proceedings still are at our Socialist open-air meetings !)

We selected as our first speaker Pollack (a brass-finisher), on account of his having a powerful voice, hoping thereby to attract the passers-by and a few miners who were leaning against a neighbouring blank wall. But the stratagem did not succeed. The miners, finding they could hear what the speaker was saying without moving closer in, clung to their gable wall, giving no indication that they were in the least interested in what was being shouted in their ears ; while the passers-by, hearing the words 'Socialism' and 'Labour,' were satisfied that the subject was of no interest to them, and passed unheedingly on. Experience, I may say, has long since taught us that the better way to begin an open-air meeting is to put up a speaker who will address only those close to him and do so as quietly as possible. Curiosity as to what he may be speaking about almost invariably draws the beginnings of a crowd, if crowd there is at all to be had.

Pollack's efforts proving fruitless, I then made a try ; and eventually, after about twenty minutes' haranguing, drew into the ring about a dozen listeners by dwelling upon some of the more notorious facts concerning the firm of Baird & Co., the owners of the neighbouring blast furnaces and the then wealthiest iron and coal masters in Scotland.

I now introduced Morris, failing not, of course, to impress upon my scant audience the great favour which we were bestowing on them by bringing so illustrious a man to speak to them in Coatbridge. Morris, who had been fidgeting round the ring all the time, making audible assents to points in the speeches, and whose personality was evidently

the object of much curiosity among those gathered round, seemed glad that his turn to speak had now come, partly, I think, because (as always) he wanted to be *doing* something, and partly because he felt a bit nervous about addressing meetings and was anxious 'to get the job done.'

The chair (as so often happens in the case of chairs borrowed for such a purpose) was rather a rickety one, and Morris, having mounted it and feeling his foothold somewhat unsafe, at once dismounted from it with a shrug and a suppressed expletive, declaring he would plant himself on a firmer foundation. He put together a few broken bricks, by way of a foothold on the cinder heap, and began by addressing his hearers as 'Friends and fellow-workers.' How superb he looked, with his broad, blue-clad sturdy figure and his fine tousled head!

I had suggested to him that he might speak on the better days of labour in the olden time, as being a topic likely to engage the interest and sympathy of the crowd—a suggestion which he willingly adopted. But he began, as he often did, on a personal note.

'I have addressed you,' he said, 'as "friends and fellow-workers," and I do not do so merely in a complimentary way. You are, I hope, my friends, though I know none of you personally. At any rate I really don't know that I am the enemy of any man or woman in the world, unless they be sheer scoundrels seeking positively to harm other people. I want everybody to be friends and to behave towards one another as real friends always do; that is to say, trying to be happy with one another, and sharing as far as possible every means of making themselves happy. And that, as I shall explain later on if you will listen to me, is just the sum and substance of what Socialism means, which we have come here to preach to you this afternoon. And I call you "fellow workers" because, though I am, as you have just heard, a writer of poetry and such like, and what is called an artist or designer, I nevertheless do a great deal of work with my hands, hard work too, sometimes,

not only for the pleasure of doing it, but actually, as you folk do here, as a means of livelihood. But I tell you frankly that I should not, even if I could, work at the kind of work and in the kind of way of working, that you do—not even though offered a thousand pounds a week for so doing, instead of the paltry one or two pounds a week which you are asked to be content with, and which I regret to think you so frequently are content with. Sooner than work in an ironworks or coal mine as you folks do for ten or twelve hours a day, every week day, year out and year in, all my life, I should rebel rather, and take whatever consequences my rebellion might bring upon me.

'But I shall tell you what kind of work I should like to do, and what conditions I should like to work under, and I should like you and all workers to have. And to show you that what I speak of is not a wholly impossible thing, as many people suppose Socialist conditions of work would be, I shall, if you will listen to me just a little while, tell of how working people used to live and work in this country—in England, at any rate—so far back as five hundred years ago, before there were any labour-saving inventions or any of the wonderful means of producing wealth easily and abundantly that we nowadays possess.'

With this characteristic opening, Morris proceeded with his story (retold by him so often in his lectures) of how the workers worked and fared in the fourteenth century, the 'Golden Age of English labour,' as it has been called, concluding his address with a warmly affectionate account (I can hardly think of a better phrase) of what work and life might again be under Socialism. He spoke in his accustomed conversational way, his voice fairly strong, though inclining to grow husky towards the end. The evening had grown dark while he was speaking, and huge gleams of flame from the furnaces darted across the sky. The audience had now augmented to some sixty or eighty, chiefly miners, who listened with marked attention and interest. There were, however, a sprinkling of 'drunks' among the

listeners, who kept up a running fire of interjections, particularly an Irishman, who at intervals, as if seized with a recurrent spasm, shouted unintelligible threatenings about Home Rule, King William of Orange, and Socialism. But the crowd shouldered him off.

One elderly woman, who had stood by during the greater part of the address, listening with pathetic interest to every word, remarked as she was moving away : 'He's a guid man onyway ; for he looks an honest man, and he speaks the guid truth. My ain father, who was a great Radical, used to say muckle the same thing as this gentleman here ; but the working folk round aboot thocht he was cracked. The working folk noo-a-days hae awfu' little gumption in their heads, and I'm sorry to think a gentleman like this should waste his pains trying to put common sense into them.'

Questions were invited, and a gentleman—for such in style he evidently was—asked permission, not to put a question, but to say a few words. Morris nodded his head in assent, and the gentleman, who we learnt later was the cashier, or some other high-placed official in the neighbouring ironworks, without moving from his place, spoke to this effect :

'You people don't, I suppose, know who the gentleman is who has been addressing you. He is one of the leading men of literature and art of our day, and it is one of the greatest surprises of my life to find myself so unexpectedly listening to him address a meeting of this kind in Coatbridge. I am not a Socialist, and don't at all share his Utopian hopes of improving society—I wish I could, but all my experience denies them—but I greatly admire his works, both his poetry and his art, and I wish to say that I am sorry I did not know of his coming, for I am sure he is entitled to a much better meeting and to much more comfortable conditions for speaking than he has here at this cinder-heap.'

Morris in a reluctant sort of way thanked the gentleman

for his friendly remarks, but assured him that he regarded it as an uncommon delight to come to Coatbridge, or elsewhere, with his comrades and share in their propaganda experiences.

'And after all, my friend,' he added, with a twinkle in his eye, 'I wish to remind you that this is just the sort of way that Diogenes and Christ and, for all we know, Homer, and your own Blind Harry the Minstrel used to get their audiences; so I am not so far out of the high literary conventions after all! And besides, what we Socialists are out for is not to win the support of the dilettante literary and art people (though we don't in the least degree exclude them from the hope of salvation), but of the working class, who suffer most by the present system and have the most to gain by upsetting it and putting Socialism in its stead.'

There were a number of questions. One particularly—it was put by a miner—Morris answered with evident pleasure: 'Does the lecturer propose to do away with coal-mining, and, if so, what would we do for fuel?'

'Our friend's question is quite a proper one,' replied Morris; 'but I must warn him that on some of these industrial matters I am regarded as somewhat of a heretic, even amongst Socialists. For myself, I should be glad if we could do without coal, and indeed without burrowing like worms and moles in the earth altogether; and I am not sure but we could do without it if we wished to live pleasant lives, and did not want to produce all manner of mere mechanism chiefly for multiplying our own servitude and misery, and spoiling half the beauty and art of the world to make merchants and manufacturers rich. In olden days the people did without coal, and were, I believe, rather more happy than we are to-day, and produced better art, poetry, and quite as good religion and philosophy as we do nowadays. But without saying we can do without coal, I *will* say that we could do with less than half of what we use now, if we lived properly and produced only really useful,

good, and beautiful things. We could get plenty of timber for our domestic fires if we cultivated and cared for our forests as we might do; and with the water and wind power we now allow to go to waste, so to say, and with or without electricity, we could perhaps obtain the bulk of the motive power which might be required for the essential mechanical industries. And, anyway, we should, I hope, be able to make the conditions of mining much more healthy and less disagreeable than they are to-day, and give the miners a much higher reward for their labour; and also —and this I insist is most important—no one ought to be compelled to work more than a few hours at a time underground, and nobody ought to be compelled to work all their lives, or even constantly week by week, at mining, or indeed any other disagreeable job. Everybody ought to have a variety of occupation, so as to give him a chance of developing his various powers, and of making his work a pleasure rather than a dreary burden. I have tried to answer our friend's question fairly, but I can hardly hope that, not being, maybe, a bit of a dreamer like myself, he will be satisfied with it.'

'You have answered my question quite straight,' said the miner, 'and I believe there is much truth in what you say.'

With the advance of the evening the ground had now become thronged with people, and a cheap-jack and a Salvationist band had made their respective appearance in close proximity to our meeting. A lively competition for the favour of the crowd therefore took place between the oratory of the poet of the 'Earthly Paradise,' the drumming of the Salvationists, and the blatant vociferations of the cheap-jack, who, quite unconscious of the grim mockery of his performance, was displaying rolls of loud-coloured linoleum and wall-paper which he described as 'the newest and best designs on the market, fit to make the homes of the working class vie with the palaces of princes.' Morris did not appear to notice the nature of the fellow's wares,

but the challenge of the situation roused his combative instincts, and he was loth to stand down. 'We've got to get the biggest crowd, let's have another pitch into them,' he said. But his voice was wearing out, so Stephen Downie mounted the chair and held on for another quarter of an hour.

We then ended our meeting with a final appeal to the audience to buy *Commonweal* and our Socialist pamphlets. We returned by train to Glasgow full of cheer in our adventure, except when Morris, watching the flare of furnaces and steel retorts through the carriage window—'putting out moon and stars,' as he said—fell into moments of saturnine gloom. On arriving in Glasgow we were hungry and thirsty, and Morris wished to stand us 'drinks round and something to eat' at the station restaurant, but two of our members being teetotallers, he, with a whimsical 'umph,' agreed we should go to a temperance place instead, and there we regaled ourselves on lemonade and sandwiches.

We accompanied Morris to his hotel door, and as he shook hands with us, our carpenter comrade, who had kept himself severely in the background since his misdemeanour in the afternoon, expressed to him the hope that he had not offended him by his behaviour in the train. 'I am much ashamed of myself, and hope you'll forgive me,' he said.

'I'm not the least offended, my friend,' Morris assured him cheerily. 'Why should I be? You didn't mean to offend me, and I admit it did look as if I was trying to pull your leg a bit. Besides you have seen how I can misbehave myself, and I ought to ask you all to forgive me. So good-night and good luck to you all: I have enjoyed the outing hugely.'

CHAPTER X

EDINBURGH ART CONGRESS AND AFTER

The Art Congress held in Edinburgh in 1889 proved a somewhat memorable occasion for the Socialist movement in Scotland. The Art Congress was founded in London by a number of artists and craftsmen, with the object of 'advancing the interests of Art and Industry' by widening public knowledge of the work of present-day artists and designers. The first general gathering of the Congress was held in Liverpool the year previous to the Edinburgh meeting, and was attended by the President of the Royal Academy and a host of prominent artists and craftsmen, including Morris and Walter Crane, who read papers at the sectional meetings. Its proceedings were widely noticed in the press, the members were feasted at public banquets and entertained in the houses of wealthy citizens, and the gathering was reckoned a great success.

The Edinburgh meeting promised to be no less successful. With a view to enhancing the lustre of the gathering the promoters had secured the patronage of the Marquis of Bute as president for the occasion. Great attention was bestowed on the assembly by the Scottish press, and the fashionable portion of the Edinburgh citizens vied with one another in showing hospitality to the visitors.

But a blight fell upon the repute of the meeting almost at the outset, in quite an unexpected and absurdly inconsequent way. Again, as at the Liverpool gathering, Morris and Crane, together with Cobden-Sanderson and Emery

Walker, who, Socialists as they were, stood in the forefront of their respective branches of craftsmanship, were invited to give addresses at the sectional meetings. Much to their own surprise and to the no small annoyance of the promoters of the Congress, this little group of intransigents, because of the Socialist strain in their discourses, attained great prominence in connection with the proceedings—a circumstance that caused considerable commotion in the public mind. Their presence at the Congress was spoken of by a section of the press as a cleverly devised Socialist conspiracy to capture the Congress, while the promoters were rebuked for giving them a place on the official programme.

One newspaper accused Morris and his friends of having turned the Congress into a Socialist demonstration, while another lamented the regrettable intrusion of revolutionary Socialist politics into the peaceful republic of the Arts. The headline 'Art and Socialism' flourished in the columns of all the newspapers during the week, and the subject was alluded to in many pulpits on the following Sunday.

Needless to say, we rank-and-file Socialists in Scotland were in high feather over the affair. We could not have wished for a more desirable advertisement of our Socialist principles. Hitherto Socialism had been associated in the press mainly with troublesome free-speech and unemployed disturbances, and a few nugatory election candidatures in London. We had now the gratification of seeing Socialism flamed in the public eye as the tutelary divinity of the Muses, the true spiritual progenitor of genius and all the wondrous achievements of art and literature which adorn the ascent of humanity.

This was for us a great stroke of fortune. Nor was the exultation dictated by any want of consideration for the interest of art. Whether or not, as the *Edinburgh Evening News* alleged, 'the Socialists had spoiled the Congress,' the incident had at any rate given a big lift to

the Socialist movement, and we all of us, Morris and his colleagues included, felt that the advance of the Socialist cause was of incomparably greater importance to the advance of art than was the success of an annual junketing of artists and fashionable *dilettanti*. Was it not self-evident that an Art Congress, especially one whose professed object was to promote 'the interests of Art and Industry,' which could be spoiled by the propaganda zeal of one or two of the foremost art craftsmen of the day, was already foredoomed to futility? Anyway, whether wittingly or unwittingly 'spoiled by the Socialists,' the Edinburgh meeting proved to be the last assembly of the short-lived Art Congress Association.

Morris commented briefly on the Congress in the next issue of the *Commonweal*:

'The Art Congress,' he wrote, 'was on the whole a dull affair, and would have been very dull indeed, but that to a Socialist its humours showed some signs of the times. It goes without saying that, though there were people present who were intent on playing the part of Art-philanthropists, all the paper readers, except the declared Socialists, showed an absurd ignorance of the very elements of economics; and also, of course, that the general feeling was an ignoring of the existence of the working class except as instruments to be played on. . . . Socialist artists and craftsmen (since there were none but Socialists capable of taking on the job) were set to lecture audiences of Edinburgh working men on the due methods of work for producing popular art, though both lecturers and workmen audiences knew but too well that such art was impossible for wage-slaves to make or enjoy.'

'However,' continued Morris, 'the said lecturers did not hide this fact under a bushel; and since, as a reactionary Edinburgh evening paper angrily declared, the Socialists had ruined the Congress, it is probable that their plain speaking had some effect. It must also be said that the

working-men audiences received any allusions to Socialism, or any teaching founded on it, with more than assent, with enthusiasm rather. The definitely Socialist meetings, held under the auspices of our Edinburgh friends, were very successful, and the local Socialists are well satisfied with the result of the week.'

The Rev. Dr. John Glasse bore similar testimony in the pages of the *Commonweal*:

'The presidential address (to the Crafts section) by our comrade Morris drew the largest gathering of the week. Nothing could have been better than the effect produced, for the audience not merely admired its ability, but were moved by its reasoning. The most successful of all, however, were perhaps the lectures given to working men. They were led off by Morris and Crane, and finished by Walker and Sanderson. We were not only much gratified by the reception given to our comrades, but proud to think that they had been found most competent to address the workers on matters relative to their handicrafts.'

Such were the circumstances and nature of the alleged Socialist 'Conspiracy' that 'ruined the Art Congress,' and incidentally invested the Socialist agitation in Scotland with a modest glamour of intellectual prestige. It is now quite forgotten, I suppose, in the Socialist movement itself, but at the time it was a great windfall to us, 'the feeble band and few,' who were striving by means of our hoarse shoutings at forlorn street corners, and our lecturings in shabby out-of the-way halls, to rouse our million-fold fellow citizens from centuries of ignorance and prejudice, and persuade them that in our 'fantastic and impossible schemes' lay the only hope and means of the social redemption of mankind.

Thenceforth our propaganda was treated with greater respect by the public and the press. Our lecturers were invited to speak at public conferences and in the lecture-

courses of polite religious and literary societies. And not the least gain was the part the affair played in bringing about the *rapprochement* between the Socialist and the younger art movements. It was from the Edinburgh Art Congress incident that we must date the beginning of that remarkable bent towards Socialism among the students of the Glasgow and other art schools which soon afterwards became one of the most significant facts in the culture of the period. Within half a dozen years fully more than a half of the art students in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and later in Manchester, Birmingham, and other centres, were either avowed Socialists or were largely influenced by Socialist ideas.

I must briefly relate the interesting experience we had in Glasgow with our Art Congress comrades during their visit.

On the Sunday following the Congress, the four 'culprits,' as Morris called them, were, as it happened, booked to address a meeting in Glasgow under the auspices of the Glasgow branch of the Socialist League. Crane was to give his lecture on 'The Educational Value of Art,' with blackboard illustrations, Morris was to preside, and Cobden-Sanderson and Walker were to give short addresses. This was a big catch for us, and it grieved us sorely that we could not obtain the City Hall for the meeting, and had to be content instead with the Waterloo Hall, which held at most only some 800. As it turned out, however, this hall proved large enough for the meeting —the rainy evening and the charge for admission, 1*s.* and 6*d.*, yielding us an audience that just comfortably filled the hall.

Our visitors arrived from Edinburgh on the Saturday evening, and about a dozen of us improvised a little gathering with them in the hotel. They were all in good spirits over the success of the Edinburgh gatherings, and Morris hit off amusingly the crudities of some of the 'old Duffers,' as he called them, who had been pompously speaking of art

as a kind of mumbo-jumbo fetishism for the working class. 'Just the sort of tommy rot that curates talk about religion at mothers' meetings, and Oxford professors say about education at Cutlers' Feasts.' He instanced, I think, Sir William Richmond's address in one of the sections, and a paper sent in by G. F. Watts, as among the few Congress utterances that showed any grasp at all of the real bearing of art on the lives and work of the people.

The conversation then, to our younger folks' delight, turned to literature and art topics, Mavor, Craibe Angus, and R. A. M. Stevenson keeping up the Scottish end of it. Morris, I remember, mentioned the forthcoming publication of his 'Roots of the Mountains,' which was to be printed and bound in a new style, and this led to a talk about typography, mainly between Morris and Emery Walker. In the course of this talk Morris told us how he had first broached the idea in 1885 of setting up as a printer himself, an idea which eventuated in his founding of the famous Kelmscott Press. But the subject was highly technical, and I doubt if any of us ordinary chaps realised the important project that was then well on the way to success.

Thinking that the visit of our distinguished comrades would afford a good opportunity of bringing into touch with the movement a number of outsiders who might be in sympathy with Socialist ideas though not inclined to join any political Socialist body, we had arranged to hold a sort of reception gathering and conference on the Sunday afternoon. It would, at any rate, we thought, be an interesting way of gauging to what extent interest in Socialism was spreading among the more intelligent of our fellow-citizens.

Our invitation list included several of the university professors, a number of architects, artists, and literary people, a number of town councillors and public men associated with social reform schemes, and a number of leading trade unionists, co-operators, land restorers, Ruskin Society members, and the like. We calculated that the

presence of our four visitors would attract a fairly large gathering, and had booked one of the Waterloo rooms, capable of seating 200 to 300, for the occasion. But the attendance, partly, no doubt, because of the blustering wet weather, proved disappointing, only some fifty or sixty people making an appearance. None of the professors came, and only one, Edward Caird, I think, sent a sympathetic apology. A few artists, D. Y. Cameron, John Guthrie, John Lavery, R. A. M. Stevenson, and Francis Newbery among them, if I remember rightly, formed almost the only representation of the 'brain workers,' apart from the little group of university scholars in our own branch. Of the rest, the Single Taxers and trades council members made the best show, and the co-operators the poorest. The meeting, nevertheless, proved quite an instructive and enjoyable gathering. Morris, Crane, and Cobden-Sanderson gave short addresses and answered a wide variety of questions; and some outspoken comments on Socialists and their methods of agitation were made from the benches.

Several Trade Union speakers complained that Socialists adopted a too preceptorial attitude towards Trade Unionism, and failed to appreciate the immediate needs and demands of the working class. This objection Cobden-Sanderson fully endorsed, but pointed out that the lead of Socialist thought came almost wholly from middle-class thinkers, owing to the general indifference or hostility of working-class leaders towards Socialism. It was only by an effort of the imagination that men like his colleagues and himself could visualise the situation and outlook of working men. We would not have a real Socialist movement in this country until the working class abandoned Liberal and Tory politics and became a great Labour and Socialist Party, moulding Socialist ideals and principles into practical shape for themselves.

A good deal of criticism was levelled against the anti-Parliamentary policy of the Socialist League, and the general feeling of the meeting, apart from our own members, was that the League's attitude in this respect greatly weakened

its Socialist appeal to the working class. A veteran Glasgow Green debater, 'Old John Torley,' as fiery in speech as in the colour of his hair, but withal brimful of good-humour, made a breezy onslaught on those 'High Art Socialists who designed silk curtains and velvet cushions, and got out hand-printed books bound in Russian leather, which only the idle spongers on the toil of the workers could afford to buy.'

In reply to this and several other questions relating to art, Morris made a personal statement in which he re-affirmed in substance what on many previous and after occasions he found it necessary to say respecting his own position. He acknowledged that under present-day conditions of wealth and labour the pursuit of art and literature was to men like himself a mere sort of truant boy's pastime —a fiddling while Rome was burning. 'For myself,' he said, 'I often feel conscience-stricken about it, and if I knew any corner of the world where there was social equality I should pack up and go there at once. But I am not attracted, as some good men both in present and bygone times have been, with the idea of going out into the wilderness, either as an anchorite or as one of a group of Socialist Fifth Monarchy men. I don't want to get out from among my fellow men, for with all their faults—which are not theirs only but our own—I like them and want to live and work among them. My Utopia must be pitched square in the midst of them or nowhere. But, as I say, I often feel conscience-stricken about enjoying myself, and enjoy myself much I confess I do in my art and literary work, while the mass of my fellows are doomed to such a sordid and miserable life of servitude around me. Were it not for my work and the hope of Socialism, I believe life would be positively unendurable to me—as in truth it should be to every man possessed of any aesthetic or moral feeling at all.'

At the evening meeting Morris made only a short speech as chairman, alluding good-humouredly to the criticisms of the press on his own and his colleagues' addresses at the Art

Congress. He had, he said, had the privilege of addressing Glasgow audiences quite a number of times during the past five years, and on this occasion he wanted them to hear his comrades Walter Crane and Cobden-Sanderson.

Crane was hardly what is called a good lecturer. He had little flow of language, no vigour of statement, and spoke in rather a jerky fashion. But there was a certain archness and occasionally an epigrammatical flavour in his remarks which, together with much gracefulness of gesture, made it pleasant to listen to him. In appearance he was almost ideally the artist. His finely shaped head, beautiful face with clear, kindly eyes and handsome moustache and short, pointed beard, together with his finely proportioned and mobile figure, gave him the look of a troubadour who had stepped out of some medieval page. After a few introductory remarks he asked for the blackboard, which was thereupon shifted from the side of the platform to the front, Morris, Cobden-Sanderson, and Walker meanwhile leaving their seats on the platform in order to witness his sketching from the body of the hall.

Crane's facility as a draughtsman was a matter of public repute. Most artists of ability are able to draw off-hand familiar objects with ease and considerable precision ; but Crane's facility was exceptional. The audience were delighted to see him take his chalk, and, beginning at the tail, with a few rapid sweeps of his arm, and without once breaking his stroke, evolve the outline of a cow. A few more strokes and a maid with a milkpail and a farmstead in the distance were brought in. Then came, interspersed with comments, the ' Crag Baron,' the ' Bag Baron ' (with a forest of smoking chimney stalks in the background), and the Capitalist elephant on the tortoise of Labour. There were a number of ingenious ' ideographs ' symbolising the evolution of plant and animal life. A series of sketches giving his idea of how much more attractive dress, houses, and cities might be made completed his illustrations He was heartily cheered at the conclusion of his lecture.

Cobden-Sanderson, like Crane, was a new personality to our Glasgow audiences, but his name was fairly well known from press notices of his beautiful work in bookbinding shown at Arts and Crafts Exhibitions, and from the circumstance that he had, on becoming a Socialist, given up his career at the parliamentary bar in order to practise in some degree his principles by engaging in work that might be honest, useful, and beautiful. The press, too, had but recently recorded his marriage with Annie Cobden, one of the daughters of Richard Cobden, the famous Free Trade advocate, herself well known as a suffragist agitator, noting also the fact that he adopted his wife's name with his own as a joint surname. He was an accomplished platform speaker, clear and crisp in phrase, keenly argumentative, and with fine animation in his delivery. He told how he had come to realise the wrongfulness of the present class system of society—its falsehood in commerce, in law, in politics, and in personal morality, and how he could no longer with self-respect participate in its deceptions, and had decided to devote himself to some kind of productive work that could be not only honest and useful but beautiful. The speech made a deep impression on the meeting.

Though announced as one of the speakers, Emery Walker did not address the meeting. Morris 'let him off' at his own request, as he shrank much from public speaking. Even on his own special subject of the printers' craft he only lectured on rare occasions. But he was well known in Socialist circles as the Secretary of the Hammersmith branch of the League, and as one of the unofficial art group of London Socialists. Morris esteemed him as one of his closest friends, and consulted him on matters of business and art, a thing he rarely did with others. He was personally known among us in Glasgow from visits he had paid us in our branch rooms when on business in Scotland.

We adjourned from the hall to our branch meeting rooms, where we had an hour's chat, chiefly about the internal

affairs of the League. To us of the Glasgow branch the day had been a festival. We were full of joy in the companionship we had had with our London comrades, whose earnest zeal for Socialism and whose unaffected *camaraderie* and willingness to help and encourage us deeply impressed us all. We felt that there was something new and wonderful in the fellowship of the Socialist cause, and that we were veritably on the threshold of a new era of history. Was not the dawn already aglow on our brows and in our hearts?'

CHAPTER XI

AS GUEST AND COMPANION

It was a joyous, though at times a somewhat exciting, experience, to accompany Morris on a sight-seeing expedition, especially when amidst unfamiliar surroundings. One had a sense of pleasant unrest, a feeling of expectancy that some interesting adventure was on hand, that something unwonted would occur. One forgot oneself listening to his talk and observing his movements, and one's attention was kept constantly on the alert.

But always his companionship was delightful, and the hours spent with him left an unfading fragrance in the mind.

I am now about to tell of a Sunday I had with him in Glasgow when, as he announced to me, he was going to have 'a day off,' except for his evening lecture and a couple of hours at his 'Odyssey,' and that I might do with him as I pleased. During his earlier visits he was usually the guest of some friend, such as Professor John Nichol, Dr. Dyer (then prominent in the Scottish Co-operative Movement), or R. F. Muirhead, M.A., one of the members of our League. But he preferred to stay at an hotel, where he could be more at liberty to give his spare time to writing and where he could more freely invite workmen comrades to have a chat with him. On this occasion he had arranged to put up at the Central Station Hotel, but had agreed to be my guest at my mother's house during the day.

I met him on his arrival by the night mail train from

London about seven o'clock in the morning, and after leaving his bag at the hotel and slinging his familiar 'haversack' over his arm, we set forth together for breakfast at my mother's house on the south side of the river. Although the morning was bright and warm in the spring sunshine, hardly a soul was visible in the streets; and as we walked round by George Square in order that Morris might despatch a telegram at the Central Post Office, we seemed to be almost the only inhabitants of the city. Morris had on former visits been shown the leading thoroughfares and sights of Glasgow, including the Square which is reckoned the architectural cynosure of the city. His opinion of my native town, which Robert Buchanan with a fine stretch of imagination described in his Exhibition Ode as 'the dark, sea-born city with its throne on a surge-vexed shore,' was not a complimentary one. He had only seen Glasgow under various aspects of wet and dismal weather. This morning, however, the Square, bathed as it was in spring sunshine, with its flower-beds in freshest bloom, and clear of the hubbub of the trams and other week-day traffic, had an air of modest capitoline splendour that seemed to gainsay bravely the sweeping dispraise of its detractors.

Morris glanced at the Palladian edifice of the City Chambers, still looking assertively new, that fronted the Square. The vehemence and rudeness of his expression on first seeing this building a couple of years before had astonished those who were with him, and he again turned his face from it with an unquotable epithet of contempt. Looking round the Square at the Post Office, the Merchants' House, and the far-stretching range of elaborate façades of banks and other commercial offices in St. Vincent Place, his face hardened. 'Renaissance and the devil be damned!' was his comment; and addressing me he added 'Allow me, my friend, to remark, being as this is the Sabbath day, that your respected city, like most of its commercial kind, is, architecturally speaking, woefully bad, and I fear impenitently so. Your young "Scots wha hae" of the Glasgow

School don't appear to have laid their reforming hand on your city architecture. Ruskin thirty years ago, in a lecture on architecture, called Glasgow the "Devil's Drawing Room." He would hardly feel obliged to amend his judgment of it to-day, if this is the best that Glasgow can show.'

I told him, however, that a little farther westward, where many new insurance, shipping, and other commercial premises were now being built, there were signs of better things. In several instances bold innovations based on the old Celtic style had been introduced by the younger architects.

'I'm glad to hear it,' he said, 'though I doubt me much——if you don't mind my saying so—about the applicability of your old Celtic style to the amenities of joint-stock money-grabbing.'

The statutes dotted round the Square amused him. 'It seems to me,' he said, 'that the idea has been to give the place the aspect of a cemetery—you Scottish folk being, as one of your own writers has said, much addicted to graveyard reflections. Is it not your own Laird of Logan who avers that Scotchmen are never really happy save when they are at funerals?' [1]

Looking up at the Scott monument, a tall column surmounted with an effigy of the great novelist, in the middle of the Square, he observed, 'But at any rate your Walter Scott is a worthier wight to thrust up in the Almighty's face than our London Trafalgar Bay hero.' Of Robert Burns' statue he remarked, 'They've tried, don't you think, to make your ploughman poet look something of a fine gentleman, with his pigtail, his ribboned breeches, and silver-buckled shoes? But I suppose a certain degree of class-respectability, in dress at least, is obligatory for admission into your post-mortem court of celebrities.' After going

[1] I had sent him a copy of the *Laird of Logan*, an old book of Scottish anecdotes. But the saying is not there. It is a familiar tag among Scotsmen when affecting self-depreciation among Englishmen.

round the Square, he remarked, 'You have statues to Scott, Burns, and Campbell, but none to Dunbar or David Lindsay. Nor is there, Craibe Angus tells me, any memorial in Glasgow to William Motherwell, though he was a Glasgow man, and one of your best poets, besides being among the first Britishers to perceive the greatness of old Scandinavian literature. You have the illustrious heroes Victoria and Albert, but not Wallace or Bruce. Curious, isn't it?'

As we were crossing the river he stood for a moment looking at the huge unsightly girder-bridge of the railway spanning the river and completely blocking from view the western course of the water-way. I thought he was about to explode against the monstrous eyesore, but he turned away from it with a weary gesture. 'I wonder,' he said, speaking rather to himself than to me, 'if the time will ever come—and God! surely it must come—when to do a thing like that will be reckoned as devilish as poisoning wells or burning down churches and museums of Art. We speak of ourselves as a civilised people and yet are capable of ghoulish vandalism like that.'

Our house in Crown Street was one of the tenement flats universal in Glasgow, except in the West End and suburban neighbourhoods. Morris had already some notion of the Glasgow tenement system, but was curious about some of the arrangements of the dwellings that were unfamiliar to his English eyes. Ours, though one of the more spacious and improved dwellings of its class, was, like all other tenement houses in Glasgow, provided with nothing in the shape of a garden except the customary 'back-court' or 'green' used for drying clothes, and common to all the tenants. Speaking of the absence of garden plots anywhere in Glasgow, he said he did not know whether to be more surprised that the Glasgow people were not all revolutionists, or that any of them had enough imagination left in them to be Socialists at all.

'I wonder,' he mused, 'what sort of chap I should have been, Glasier, had I been brought up a fellow townsman of

yours? Bannockburn does not appear to have done much for your city's elbow room, whatever it may have done for the "Liberty's in every blow!" that you sing about.'

At breakfast he enquired of my mother about the arrangements among the tenants for the using of the 'green,' and seemed pleased to hear that usually little or no misunderstanding arose over the allocation of space and respective washing days. 'I have always found it so,' he said, 'respecting the use of common property when there is reasonable equality of need and where self-interest is disciplined by established custom. I don't suppose there ever was much bother in the olden days among the village folk respecting the use of common land or any of the old parish possessions, so long as the people were mostly neighbours and pretty nearly on the same social level; and even nowadays in the English villages the people get on in a much more friendly way over their public property rights than over their private property concerns.'

My mother was becoming accustomed to entertaining Socialist agitators whom her son invited home with him, often without forewarning her of his intention; but like so many Scottish, and especially Highland hostesses, she was somewhat shy of new guests, particularly when they were persons of public fame or visitors from other countries. Though she did not at that period know much about Socialism, except that, like Irish Land Leaguism and Atheism, it was regarded as a highly disreputable and dangerous doctrine, she respected and welcomed whomsoever her son brought to her door.

Such diverse personalities as Andreas Scheu, Leo Melliet, Lawrence Gronlund, the Rev. Dr. Glasse, Prince Kropotkin, Stepniak, Henry George, and Edward Carpenter had thus sat at her board, and each had presented a fresh problem of hospitality to her, so concerned was she that they should be 'welcome' in every sense of the word. But with Morris, as with the others, she was soon wholly at ease. His unaffected courtesy and simplicity of manners

won her confidence at once, and it was a joy to me to see him and my mother so completely at home with each other. She had wondered what to make ready for breakfast, but I had assured her that he was not 'faddy' about his food, and that she need have no misgivings about his enjoying the customary fare of her table. So she had made him a fine ashetful of our own favourite Sunday-morning dish, to wit, ham, eggs, sausage, and haddock, with home-baked scones and oat-cake. He enjoyed the *menu* greatly, and said so (I should hardly have forgiven him if he hadn't !), and, his appetite being keen after the long train journey and the morning walk, he ate quite heartily, which rejoiced her heart. He chatted freely, but not obtrusively, keeping his conversation upon topics likely to be of common interest round the table. Learning that my mother knew Gaelic, he asked her about the West Highland pronunciation of certain words that had a common Gaelic and Latin root, and he told my sisters about some of the curious domestic customs in Iceland which he had observed during his visit to that country a dozen or so years previously.

After breakfast I sat with him in the front room, he meanwhile drawing from his 'haversack' an Odyssey and a Greek lexicon preparatory to his daily task of translation. He had much delight in the Odyssey, because it afforded so many glimpses into the everyday life and feeling of the Ionic people ; many of the incidents and customs in the poem were remarkably akin to those described in the Norse Sagas.

I left him in the room by himself at his Odyssey, while I went over to Glasgow Green to take part in our usual Sunday morning open-air meeting of the League. He offered to accompany me, but I knew he was pressed to get on with his Odyssey translation, and assured him that our comrades would feel that he had done his duty amply by them if, in addition to giving his evening lecture, he turned up at our afternoon meeting and said a few words.

On my return I found him chatting with James Mayor

and Archibald MacLaren, assistant professor of Greek in the Glasgow University—and, I think, R. F. Muirhead, M.A., all three members of our branch, whom I had invited to join us at midday dinner. In the conversation at table Morris asked about the attitude of the Glasgow professors towards Socialism. He was told that only Edward Caird, of the Moral Philosophy chair, showed any sympathy with Socialist ideas or indeed with democratic politics of any kind. Professor John Nichol of the Literature chair, who had formerly been a strong Radical and friend of Mazzini, was now an embittered Unionist, while Lord Kelvin and the Science and Medical men were almost without exception Tory and reactionary.

'It is a rum state of affairs, don't you think?' said Morris. 'But it's the same all round. The intellectuals are on the wrong side on almost every question that affects the right understanding of life. They are the priesthood of the mumbo-jumboism of modern civilisation—Edward Carpenter is quite right about that. Were I had up for any sort of crime touching property or political freedom, I should prefer to take my chance with a jury of dukes and sporting squires, rather than one of professors and college dons.'

Reference was made to the fact that the Scottish Universities had, without exception, at recent parliamentary and Lord Rectorship elections, elected Unionist politicians who had no distinction whatever in science or literature.

'That just shows you,' said Morris, 'that your intellectuals, dull dogs as they mostly are, have some scent of what's in the wind, and that when it comes to the pinch they are more concerned about the preservation of their rotten class privileges than about the interests of literature and art. Matthew Arnold was right about the Philistines, being himself a good bit of that kidney. We'll have to mend or end what we call education, or it will play the devil with us. Fancy a Carlylean aristocracy of talent, the country under the benevolent rule of Senior Wranglers and LL.D's!

Or fancy a democracy educated up, or rather down, to the level of Oxford and Cambridge, as some even of our Socialist friends would have it!'

He was reminded that John Ruskin had a year or two previously contested the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University as a Tory Unionist, but had been badly defeated. 'But he called himself also the "reddest of red Communists,"' Morris observed, 'and he deserved to be defeated for his pranks. But I don't suppose he was defeated because he called himself a red-hot Communist, or even because he held heterodox views about Capital and Labour. Your University folk knew and cared precious little about his views on these questions, or if they did, I fancy they took those views more seriously than did the stock-jobbers. He was defeated, I suspect, simply because he represented to the generality of the intellectuals what they particularly affect to esteem—namely Literature and Art—but which they really don't. Literature and Art are rebellious jades. They preferred an uninformed political reactionary because, as I have said, they sniff revolutionary trouble ahead, and they want to set up as stiff a political guard as they can for the protection of their class privileges.'

The conversation turned for a bit on his translation of the Odyssey, and he discussed with MacLaren certain points in Greek idiom and grammar. Something was said about a recent attack on Morris by W. E. Henley in one of the magazines, but Morris dismissed the topic with a contemptuous rap at 'Grub Street garbage.'

After lunch I proposed to Morris that we should start an hour or so earlier than need be for the afternoon meeting, so as to have time for a look at the Cathedral. This he agreed to, and our companions having to leave us for engagements of their own, he and I set forth together. I took him up the old Saltmarket Street (famous in 'Rob Roy'), where he halted every now and then to note some detail in the now old and shabby relics of the mansions where once Bailie Nicol Jarvie and the prosperous merchants of the city

dwelt. These old buildings in the Scottish baronial style of architecture interested him greatly.

Turning along London Street (why we took this roundabout route, I now forget) we struck down a narrow passage known as 'Shipka Pass,' where, in the window of a quack doctor's herbal dispensary, were exhibited a 'Wax Venus' anatomical model and illustrated literature of the Palais Royal type. There had recently been a good deal of satirical comment in the London press over the refusal of the Glasgow Town Council to accept for the Art Gallery a picture with a nude figure, the ground of their refusal being that the picture was 'indecent.' The unexpected display, therefore, of pornographical wares in a public thoroughfare in the very heart of the city rather surprised Morris. I explained to him, however, that it was one thing for our 'unco guid City Fathers,' as they were sarcastically called by their London critics, to refuse to accept and exhibit a picture which they thought objectionable, and another thing for them to suppress by prosecution a shopkeeper for exhibiting and selling what he was pleased to describe as 'scientific works.'

I did not, however, gather from Morris that he was wholly on the side of the London press. 'There are,' he said, 'some painters who are rum enough coves, and some paintings that are only fit for monkey-houses.' Meanwhile a big gaunt labourer, who had been gaping wonder-struck at the Wax Venus, now kept close by us, eyeing Morris with stupid curiosity. I suggested to Morris that the fellow evidently regarded him as the 'Famous Professor and Specialist,' referred to in the herbalist's window. Much amused, Morris began telling me a story about a country bumpkin returning home drunk from a fair. While telling the story we emerged from the 'Pass' and were crossing the Gallowgate, a broad thoroughfare, just as he had reached the climax of the tale. In the zest of his recital he halted in the middle of the street, and oblivious to the astonishment of the passers-by and to my discomfiture, he dramatically imitated the drunken speech and gestures of the hero of the

tale. Visibly scandalised at what they conceived to be the drunken jollity of a Highland farmer or skipper who had been visiting some neighbouring 'shebeen,' the passers-by cast reproachful glances at us both. One man, dressed in his 'Sunday best,' even made steps towards us with the intent, I could see, of reprimanding my companion for his unseemly state in a public thoroughfare on the Sabbath day; but a forbidding gleam in my eye deterred him. As we were in a neighbourhood where the Socialist League frequently held meetings, and where I was likely to be recognised as 'one of those Socialist agitators,' I was glad when we escaped public attention by turning up the nearest side street. Morris had not in the least noticed the spectacular interest which he had aroused, and of course I did not allude to it.

When we arrived at the Cathedral a number of people, members of the choir perhaps, were passing out. Morris lingered a few moments in the outlying graveyard, looking at the inscriptions on the tombstones, and then we made towards the porch of the southern aisle which was used for public admission.

We were within a few yards of the doorway when he stopped abruptly, as if struck by a rifle ball, his eyes fixed furiously on some object in front of him. As he glared he seemed to crouch like a lion for a leap at its prey, his whiskers bristling out. 'What the hell is that? Who the hell has done that?' he shouted, to the amaze, alarm, and indignation of the people near by.

I looked in the direction of his infuriated gaze, and saw at once what was the offending object. There it was; conspicuous enough—a sculptured memorial or sarcophagus in shining white marble jammed into the old grey stonework of the aisle, cutting through the string-courses of the base and projecting up into and completely cutting off a portion of the window above—in truth an atrocious piece of vandalism. 'What infernal idiot has done *that*?' Morris again demanded, and heedless of the consternation around him poured forth a torrent of invective against the unknown

perpetrators of the crime. For a moment I thought he might actually spring upon the excrescence and tear out the hateful thing with his bare fists. Meanwhile the scandalised onlookers, believing they were witnessing the distraction of some unfortunate fellow creature bereft of his reason, resumed their way, remarking compassionately about him to one another.

The banging of the heavy studded doors of the porch by the sexton, closing the Cathedral until the evening service, arrested his invective. Anxious to divert his attention from the desecrating tablet, I remarked that we should not now gain admission into the interior of the Cathedral. 'Damn the interior of the Cathedral!' he shouted. 'I've seen enough of the depredations of your Cathedral blockheads. Catch me putting my nose into another mess of restoration botchery.'

Quitting the Cathedral ground, we turned towards the Necropolis, an eminence now converted into a public cemetery, which commands a wide view over the city.

Glancing up at the huge mound speckled with glittering white tombstones and monuments, he remarked on the circumstance that Christian communities had failed to make tolerable architectural features of their burial places, even when, as in Glasgow and so many other towns, the most prominent and attractive situation had been appropriated for burying grounds. In Italy, where they had the tradition of the catacombs and the pantheons, some attempt had been made to give architectural importance to burial places, particularly such as were preserves for the interment of rich and illustrious persons. But, generally speaking, he said, cemeteries were amongst the most incongruous and positively unsightly creations of civilised man. The only burial places that showed even decency of public taste were some of the old churchyards, where simple stone tablets or slabs had been made of the same kind of stone as the adjoining church, which became veiled in a kindly way by the grass or yew bushes. Yet it was surely possible to devise some sort of

Houses of the Dead, which, while frankly declaring their purpose, were yet beautiful and impressive as an expression of religious and communal feeling. The older civilisations, as we know, attached great importance to their burial places, making imposing temples of them. But in this, as in so many other things, individual and family vanity and private property feeling had completely obstructed the development of what might have been one of the noblest expressions of communal feeling.

The John Knox obelisk monument, a large Doric column surmounted by a statue of the famous reformer, is the most prominent feature of the Necropolis. I expected Morris would poke fun at it, but he was only gently satirical. 'He does look as though he were the Lord of Sabaoth up there, don't he? Or shall we say, Shepherd of the Dead? But he was something of a hero—and that too despite the fact that Carlyle said so, my friend. He was, in his own way, a great reformer. He had a big idea of making the people upright and self-respecting and intelligent, concerning not only the affairs of the Church but the public weal—according to his lights. He was not such a narrow-minded zealot as were so many of your respected presbyters of later date. You see, Dr. Glasse of Edinburgh has been coaching me up on your kirk history. He read me parts of the "Book of Discipline," which I think most sensible stuff.'

I mentioned that the Jewish burying-ground, which was situated in the upper corner of the Necropolis, had inscribed on its gateway the lines from Byron's 'Hebrew Melodies,' beginning:

'Oh, weep for those that wept by Babel's stream,'—

one of the few tributes to the Jewish race in Christian literature.

Morris, however, showed no desire to see the inscription. He remarked, 'Byron's "Hebrew Melodies" were a bit "put on," don't you think? although there was something

in the glamour of things Jewish that attracted him. But I'm not "begrudging" him his sympathy with the Jews. I'm no Jew-hater. As likely as not I belong to one of the lost ten tribes.'

'But where are we going? Why are we here?' he asked, suddenly halting, as we were walking along one of the cemetery paths.

'Indeed, I do not know,' I replied, and explained that on finding the Cathedral closed I had taken him for a walk round. But it was now time, I said, for us to be getting to the meeting on the Green.

He was much amused. 'And so you brought me to a cemetery by the way of pleasant recreation,' he said with a twinkle. 'I suspect it's in the blood, my boy, and that the saying about Scotchmen enjoying going to funerals is not a defamatory one. But after preaching you, as I did a few minutes ago, a discourse according to the example of my fellow-countryman, Sir Thomas Browne, on funeral urns, I had better not heave any more stones at your Scottish taste for tombstones.'

On the way back, notwithstanding his vexation at the Cathedral and his 'reflection among the tombs,' he was, as usual, brimful of pleasantry about the oddity of things he observed by the way.

Towards the foot of the High Street, the neighbourhood of which at that period was a congeries of slums, the throng of children became so dense that we had to thread our way as through a market crowd. Having almost no room to play in, the youngsters were inclined to be more noisy and mischievous in their pranks, and passengers displaying any peculiarity of appearance rarely escaped their larkish compliments. Morris and myself, with our shock hair, soft hats, and unconventional make-up, doubtless looked a somewhat outlandish pair, and presented a conspicuous mark for their jocosity; and we had to run the gauntlet of a more than usual fairing of their salutation and mimicry. 'Oh, my, look what's coming!' 'Hide yer!' 'Buffalo Bill!'

'Holy Moses!' 'Run and lock the park gates, Jamie!' and like exclamations heralded our way. Morris with his grand, elderly, seafaring mien, attracted the brunt of the waggery. One urchin fronted him with a respectful gesture. 'You'll find one just over the way, sir,' he said solicitously. 'Find what, my little man?' asked Morris unsuspectingly. 'A hairdresser, sir'—and a chime of laughter greeted the sally, while a little girl seated on the kerb with an infant in her arms piped out, 'Dinna mind them, mister, they're jist trying tae mak' a fool o' ye.' A troop of youngsters fell into line behind us, chanting improvised doggerel:—

> 'Sailor, sailor; sou'west!
> Dance a jig in the crow's nest!'

Morris, who was accustomed to the guffaw of juvenile plebeians in the lower quarters of London, took this sportiveness wholly in good part, occasionally returning their banter *con amore*, much to the little larrikins' delight. He remarked on the exceeding cleverness, and often ingenious wit, displayed by children when in play together, especially in the poorer districts where they were freer from the tutelage of grown-ups, and had developed clan or community traditions of their own. 'But the faculty soon withers,' he added; 'the poor things become dull and vacant-minded once they grow out of childhood and lose the sap of the common stem. The natural well-springs of their imagination become soiled and run dry.'

Jail Square, as the wide pavement opening in front of Glasgow Green is called, is, or was, the most popular public forum in Scotland, and I suppose in Great Britain. Every week-night and all Sunday the Square is thronged by groups of men, mostly of the working class, listening eagerly to the debates on topics of religion and politics—in those days chiefly Catholicism *versus* Protestantism, Calvinism, Atheism, Spiritualism, Home Rule, Henry Georgeism, Republicanism, and Socialism. A portion of the space

close to the railings of the park was by custom reserved for the speechifying of religious or political propaganda bodies, stools or chairs being used as platforms.

Morris was greatly taken with the scene. His heart seemed to warm at the sight of the crowded groups of disputants, as if it recalled to him something of the early folk-moot and market-place assemblies of which he always wrote so affectionately. But our time was nearly spent, and I took him towards the group against the railings where the League meeting was in full swing. Pete Curran, afterwards Labour M.P. for Jarrow, was speaking, and recognising Morris he cut short his speech announcing that the author of 'The Earthly Paradise' would now address the meeting—an announcement that at once caused the crowd to gather in.

Morris mounted the stool and spoke for about twenty minutes. He referred to the recent Free Speech troubles in London, and congratulated the working men of Glasgow on having preserved the right of Free Speech on so large a scale in the heart of the city. He explained in quite simple terms the aims of Socialism, avoiding the usual jargon phrases of the movement. Referring to what he had just seen of the way in which the children of the poor were pent up dismally in the slums, he contrasted the ugly and sordid conditions of the lives of the people generally with what might be and ought to be in a civilised and wealthy nation—his allusions alike to the rich and the poor being wholly untinged with cynicism or insult.

Several questions were put to him, one of which was: 'In one of the evening papers last night you are described as a rich man. Are you willing to submit to a general divide of riches?'

'I am not quite a rich man, as rich men go nowadays,' replied Morris; 'but I am richer than I ought to be compared with the mass of my fellows; or rather, perhaps, I shall say they are poorer than they ought to be. I am more than willing that my riches, such as they are, should be put into the common stock of the nation; and I shall rejoice to

work for the community, and give it the benefit of whatever talent or skill I possess, for the same wages that I demand for, and that the nation could afford to pay, under a proper economic and moral system, to every workman—dustman, blacksmith, or bricklayer—in the land.' A big cheer greeted the reply.

The word having gone round that it was William Morris, the famous poet, who was addressing the Socialist crowd, the audience had grown to quite a large one ; but I had now to hurry him off in order that he might have a cup of tea before the evening meeting. He was heartily cheered as he dismounted from the stool. A small contingent of people followed us a bit of the way, eager to have a better look at the distinguished and attractive 'Poet, Artist, and Socialist.'

The evening meeting was a great success. The Waterloo Hall was filled with about 800 people, the majority of whom had paid 6*d.* and 3*d.* for admission, and at the conclusion of the lecture a resolution in favour of Socialism was adopted almost unanimously.

As our custom was, we adjourned from the Hall after the meeting to the branch rooms, where Morris smoked and talked and sang with us for a goodly hour.

CHAPTER XII

CAMPAIGNING DAY AT HAMMERSMITH

BETWEEN the years 1889 and 1893 I made occasional week-end visits to Morris at Hammersmith, taking part in the Sunday propaganda of the local branch. The branch, which on the break-up of the League in 1890 changed its name into the Hammersmith Socialist Society, had its head-quarters at Kelmscott House, then the most active, as it was the most famous, centre of Socialist propaganda in London. An account of a typical week-end spent with Morris and our Hammersmith comrades will therefore, I think, be interesting to my readers.

Usually I arrived at Hammersmith from Scotland on the Saturday afternoon, and passed the evening with Morris at home. The earlier part of the evening would likely be spent with Mrs. Morris and Jenny in the drawing-room, when Morris would read aloud from some favourite book. Thereafter he and I would sit in the library, where one or two friends would gather for a chat. Among those likely to be with us were Emery Walker, John Carruthers, Philip Webb, Catterson Smith, Cobden-Sanderson, and other Socialist friends living in the neighbourhood ; occasionally, after Sunday lectures, other friends from more distant parts of London might call in.

What rare symposia these little gatherings in the library were ! Somewhere in the cabinets of my memory a record of the conversations and discussions has doubtless been preserved, but only as dried flowers are in the leaves of a

book, their colour faded, their fragrance and essence gone. In Morris' company conversation could never sink into banality. His presence inhibited idle and paltry chatter He was fond of playfulness and humour, but was the deadly enemy of indolence as of mere levity of mind.

The room itself had a spell for the imagination. One could not fail to see that some tutelary genius had its abode in it. Looking around the room, all so charming in the natural simplicity of its furniture—only useful and beautiful things were there, masterpieces of literature and priceless old volumes, Dürer engravings and rare pieces of craftsmanship, and all so kindly lit up in the tranquil candle-light with its ambient shadows—one was conscious of that companionableness in all about one that one feels in a deep forest glade. At times the room seemed a very sanctuary of the Muses or an Abbot's cloister ; but its aspects, like its master's moods, were many, and seemed to change responsively. I remember how transfigured it appeared that night—the Saturday night of the week-end visit which I am about to describe. Morris was in a particularly insurgent mood. He had been rating Gladstone and the Liberal Party, which led someone to remark incautiously that the Tories were really more in sympathy with liberty and democracy than the Liberals, citing in support of this view some dictum of Dr. Johnson's.

Morris was Johnsonian in his reply. He asked what liberty or democracy the Tories had ever agitated or fought for ? In the country districts the Tories were on their own dunghill, and what sort of liberty or democracy had they given the poor agricultural labourers there ? He pursued this vein, recalling facts from history and his own observation, at first in an argumentative way, but gradually firing himself up into a magnificent polemic against the aristocracy, the Church, and eventually the whole property-grabbing class system of modern society. The oppression of Egypt and Ireland, and the police attack in Trafalgar Square, he tossed as flaming faggots into his indictment.

Amazingly rebellious things took flight in his imagination, and as I sat there enthralled by the marvel of his words and his wonderful personality, the room with its antique emblems seemed to become more and more remote from the outside world. I remember noticing how the tobacco smoke from our pipes hung about the ceiling in dim serpent-like coils, and my enjoying a feeling of mystery and adventure much as a school-boy might feel in a smuggler's cave or on a pirate's quarter-deck.

During the last thirty years of his life it was an established custom with Morris to breakfast every Sunday morning with Burne-Jones, when both were in town. This custom, which was one of his most cherished enjoyments, and one of the few practices of personal regimen which did not give way to the urgency of Socialist engagements, prevented his joining regularly in the Sunday morning propaganda of the movement. Owing, however, to the occasional absence from town of Burne-Jones, and to the fact that Morris often imposed on himself the self-denying ordinance of shortening his after-breakfast chats with his friend, there were for several years few Sunday forenoons that Morris did not take part in the Hammersmith meeting, or speak in Hyde Park, Victoria Park, or elsewhere in London.

The Sunday morning of my visit was not one of his Burne-Jones mornings, and he was scheduled as one of the speakers at Hammersmith Bridge, the favourite Sunday-morning pitch of the branch. Shortly after ten o'clock Emery Walker and one or two other members called in, in order to take with them the literature and banner for the meeting, and together we all (the callers-in, Morris, May Morris, and myself) sallied forth for our rendezvous. The banner of the branch, designed by Crane and worked by May Morris, was a handsome ensign, and Morris, who, as we know, was immensely fond of all communal regalia, bore it furled on its pole over his shoulder—and a fine banner-bearer he was to see.

It was a glorious morning, and the propaganda strength

of the branch was well represented at the bridge, among those present being Morris, May Morris, Mrs. Cobden-Sanderson, Mrs. Watt, Beasley, Tarleton, Catterson Smith, Bullock, Bridges Adams, Davies, the Grant brothers, Tochatti, and Mordhorst.

At least five or six of us spoke. This was more than usual, and much too many, and Tarleton grumbled that they ought instead to have divided themselves and held another meeting elsewhere. As it was, though the speeches were all, except in one instance, short ones, the meeting was prolonged beyond the usual hour—1 P.M.—with the result that three-fourths of the audience had melted away into the neighbouring public-houses, which opened at that hour, before a collection arranged for that morning could be taken and a proper opportunity afforded for questions.

The audience at the bridge consisted for the most part of working-men, who were accustomed to spend an hour or so on Sunday morning lounging on the bridge before dinner hour—or public-house time. The majority of them seemed quite amicably disposed towards the Socialist meeting, but did not trouble themselves much about politics. Occasionally one of them would join the branch, an event that was announced at the next business meeting. There was not wanting, however, a sufficient spice of opposition on the part of one or two habitués, men from the Tory-Democratic camp, who interjected questions and occasionally insisted on stating their views. One of these—the most harassing of them, in fact—eventually declared himself a convert to Socialism and joined the branch—an acquisition which proved a misfortune in disguise. As an interrupter and opponent this individual excited interest at the meetings, and gave easy points to our speakers; but as an evangelist of Socialism he did not shine. He was so blundering in his argument, and so obviously disreputable in his boozing habits, that the branch prayed audibly for his reconversion to his old anti-Socialist principles and his return to the Tory fold.

The branch at the period I am speaking of was in great propaganda fettle, and in addition to the usual morning meeting, and an early evening meeting at Walham Green or elsewhere, and the usual indoor evening lecture in the hall, a few of the more ardent propagandists were running a special series of afternoon meetings in Ravenscourt Park. Morris was not asked to take part in this supplementary mission of the branch, his comrades realising the claims which the editing of *Commonweal* and his own literary work had upon his time.

Together with Bullock, the Grants, Tochatti, and others, I took part in holding the meeting in the park, where we succeeded in gathering a big crowd, mostly of the better-to-do office and shop-keeping class. It was a capital audience to speak to, with its provoking air of respectability, but I doubt if much was achieved in the way of 'making Socialists' among them. They were, I fear, exceedingly stony ground. But, anyway, we were spreading the word.

Later in the afternoon, previous to our going to the evening meeting at Walham Green, Bernard Shaw had called in on his way to some special Fabian committee, which was to be held at May Morris' house farther along the riverside at Hammersmith Terrace. This was the first time I had met Shaw. Morris, I remember, was showing Hooper, Walker and myself proofs of initial letters printed in red for his Kelmscott Press, asking whether we liked the colour. Hooper and Walker expressed themselves pleased with it, but, feeling myself technically incompetent on such a matter, I ventured no remarks. On Shaw's entering, Morris asked his opinion. Examining the print for a moment, Shaw said that he thought the colour a little too light—too yellowish, I think he said. Morris looked at the print again, holding it at various distances from his eyes. 'Umph! Perhaps you may be right,' he said. 'I'll have proofs pulled to-morrow in a deeper tint, and see how it looks.'

On rising to go, Shaw said to me, 'You are lecturing to-night. I should like to hear you, but I expect our

committee meeting will keep me rather late. Of course, I know that you have some sensible things to say, but are you going to say anything fresh—heretical, I mean? If so, I shall make an effort to come; but if you are going to keep on the beaten track, it's hardly worth my while, is it?' I replied with conventional modesty that I did not suppose that anything I had to say was likely to be either new or particularly heretical to him. 'Ah well,' he said, 'you won't mind if I postpone the pleasure of hearing your Scottish wit and wisdom till another occasion,' and with that he made off. This was the first time I had met Shaw, and the bluntness of his civility was a novel experience. As a matter of fact, he was the only person besides Morris likely to be at the meeting whose opinion on the argument of my lecture I should specially have liked to hear. His announcement, therefore, that he would not be present, was a disappointment to me, none the less so because he had made me unwittingly accessory to his absence.

In the evening Morris accompanied us to Walham Green, where he, Catterson Smith, Bullock, and myself addressed a fair-sized crowd of people of the artisan type, who seemed to take quite an intelligent interest in the speeches. Here, as at Hammersmith Bridge, Morris vigorously pushed the sale of literature while the other speakers were holding forth, going round the ring with a bundle of *Commonweals* and pamphlets under his arm, and inviting the listeners in a brotherly way to sample some of his wares. Sometimes a listener would seem to hesitate about parting with a penny for a purchase, whereupon Morris would say, 'Well, my friend, never mind about payment. I'll stand that if you'll promise to read the paper. You can hand it on to someone else when you're done with it.'

Morris and I hurried back early from the meeting, as I was due to lecture in the hall at eight o'clock, and he was to take the chair.

The famous meeting-room was an out-building attached

to the side of Kelmscott House—the house itself having, previous to Morris' tenancy, been the residence of Dr. George MacDonald, the celebrated story writer and mystic, and before that of Sir Francis Rolands, the inventor of the electric telegraph. The outhouse was originally a stable, but was turned by Morris into a carpet-weaving and designing room, and later he had it fitted up as a meeting-place for the Hammersmith Socialists. It was a long room, with the floor raised three steps at the further end, forming a dais or platform with a side door leading into the garden of the house. It was quite simply furnished, and visitors who expected, as it seems many did, to find it fitted up as a sort of Morris art show-room were disappointed with its severely utilitarian character. The furniture consisted of rush-bottom chairs and several long wooden forms, a lecture table on the platform, and a bookstall near the entrance. The plain whitewashed walls were covered with rush matting. One or two engravings, portraits of Sir Thomas More and other Socialist pioneers, and copies of Walter Crane's famous Socialist cartoons were hung on either side of the room. The banner of the branch was displayed behind the platform, on which there were a piano and some copies of Roman mosaics.

The fame of Morris brought visitors—literary men, artists, politicians, and Socialists—almost every Sunday evening to the meetings. Many distinguished people from America and foreign countries had heard Socialism preached here for the first time in their lives. Almost every notable Socialist speaker, irrespective of party, had spoken from its platform, some of them many times. Among the list might be mentioned Kropotkin, Stepniak, Lawrence Gronlund, Bernard Shaw, Sidney and Mrs. Webb, Graham Wallas, Mrs. Besant, Sydney Olivier, Hyndman, Herbert Burrows, J. A. Hobson, John Burns, Pete Curran, John Carruthers, Walter Crane, Philip Webb, Cobden-Sanderson and Ramsay Macdonald. Morris and Shaw, however, were the most frequent lecturers—above all, Morris himself.

When not engaged lecturing elsewhere, Morris was always present, and was usually called upon to preside, and liked to do so. But, whether in the chair or not, Morris invariably took part in the after discussion. It was also his custom when at home to invite the lecturer of the evening, together with one or two friends, to supper after the meeting. To be asked to these supper gatherings was a coveted privilege, and with his usual consideration Morris was careful to invite, as occasion allowed, one or two of the least prominent members of the branch, so that none was denied the honour and hospitality of his table.

The subject of my lecture was 'Social and Physical Equality.' I had taken great pains in preparing the notes, writing out part of the lecture in full, alike because I felt it was incumbent on me to sustain as best I could the reputation of the Kelmscott House platform, and because the subject was one which I thought would, if well handled, be of interest to the more thoughtful Socialists among my hearers.

It was, I confess, a notable event for me to lecture at Kelmscott House with Morris in the chair.

The main argument of my lecture was (1) that equality of social conditions would inevitably tend towards greater equality of bodily and mental powers, and (2) that this greater equality of physical powers as well as of social conditions would operate to increase the nobler diversity of character and multiply the means of happiness in life, by eliminating the violent, ugly, and hateful contrasts, not only of wealth and poverty, but of health and disease, strength and weakness, ability and stupidity, and beauty and ugliness in the human race. Diversity resulting from defect of mind or body was not and could not be a source of beauty or happiness to any but depraved minds. It was one of Morris' habits when presiding at meetings to murmur assent or disapproval at what was being said, keeping his hand meanwhile employed drawing bits of ornament,

sprays of foliage, initial letters and such-like, and using for the purpose the backs of envelopes, blotting-paper, handbills, or any scrap of paper that lay at hand. On this occasion he 'illuminated' several envelopes while I was speaking —one of which I have preserved—and commented freely, mostly in monosyllables, on my statements. His expressions were for the most part favourable, chiefly emphasis of approval; but I none the less felt unusually ill at ease when speaking, and often had difficulty in finding the right word. In particular I remember that I stumbled into the frequent use of the word 'predicates' as a verb, in the sense of 'implies' or 'involves' as a consequence (a piece of scientific jargon I had learnt from Spencer, I think). Morris visibly squirmed every time I used the word, but, try as I would to avoid it, the offensive Latinism obtruded itself at every opportunity.

He was on his feet inviting questions almost before I sat down. They came pell-mell, but most of them were irrelevant, and Morris promptly told the questioners concerned that they were so. Discussion followed. Among the first to speak was a young lady sitting near the back of the hall (who, I afterwards learned, was quite a stranger). She was evidently in a state of nervous excitement, and spoke so low that we on the platform only ascertained what she had said after the meeting was over. It appears that she expostulated—'Oh, Mr. Morris, don't you think it is wrong in a man of your great talents and influence to be engaged in leading these young men astray—astray from God's truth—into the dangerous paths of Atheism and revolution?' Adding a few more words of religious appeal, she sat down, but immediately afterwards rose and hastened from the room like an affrighted spirit—poor girl! It is a pity Morris did not hear what she said. His reply would, we may be sure, have quietened if not banished her fears, and maybe have lessened the distress of her soul, evidently deeply sincere, by giving her a juster thought of the ways alike of God and her Socialist fellowmen.

The discussion, like the questions, was very discursive. The usual 'cranks' had their usual say—each dilating on his own particular theme. Tochatti, an Anarchist tailor from Glasgow, discoursed on the advantages of Anarchism over State Socialism, inasmuch as Anarchism would allow the free play of all our human faculties without artificial hindrances of any kind. This observation brought to his feet Mordhorst, a Danish Socialist, who insisted that it was not *less* law but *more* law that we needed—law that would sternly put down landlordism, sweating, and all other abominations of the existing Capitalist system. He was followed by Munsey, a postal telegraphic official, a very earnest worker in the branch, who complained that the lectures were becoming too learned and far-fetched for useful Socialist teaching. What was wanted was plain statements of Socialist economics, such as a workman could understand. The subject discussed by the lecturer was, he said, no doubt interesting, but it did not concern Socialists much at present. What we had to do was to get the workers organised for Socialism. The Social Revolution depended solely on the working class. 'Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.'

These familiar free-lances, having fired their shafts, the discussion was continued by several speakers who took up the theme of the lecture, and made some instructive points of criticism. Morris himself, in concluding the debate, which he had listened to with much more patience than I had expected, said he had greatly enjoyed the lecture. Many of the ideas in it were fresh and interesting to him. He heartily agreed that all diversities of body and mind which implied suffering, inferiority, or incapacity of any kind for the service or enjoyment of life, were hateful. No right-thinking person could derive pleasure or pride from beholding among their fellows the lack of capacity for giving happiness to others, any more than the lack of means of obtaining happiness for themselves. Yet these were the chief diversities that life afforded to-day

At supper-table after the meeting the subject of intellectual and physical equality was taken up again, and we listened to highly interesting accounts of the difference of capacity amongst the races in South America from John Carruthers, who as a railway engineer and contractor had great experience of the industrial habits of the people in that part of the world. It was midnight when Morris wished his guests 'good-night' cheerily at the door.

Such was one Sunday's campaigning at Hammersmith. 'You must feel jolly tired—I do,' said Morris, as he showed me upstairs to bed, candle in hand. 'Making Socialists is rather a stiff sort of art work, don't you think?'

CHAPTER XIII

LAST DAYS OF THE LEAGUE

When in 1888 at the Whitsunday Annual Conference of the League the parliamentarian faction were decisively out-voted and asked to withdraw from the Party, there was for the moment a general expectation among the victors that the troubles within the League were over, and that its work would now proceed unimpeded by internal strife. Morris, however, was far from hopeful of that result. He knew the movement both in London and in the Provinces better than anyone else did, and he was too quick of eye not to discern the new peril of the situation. Returning that evening from the Conference to Hammersmith he remarked to me rather gloomily, 'We have got rid of the parliamentarians, and now our anarchist friends will want to drive the team. However, we have the Council and the *Commonweal* safe with us for at least a twelve-month, and that is something to be thankful for.'

This uneasy feeling about what had occurred was often expressed by Morris during my visit. There was, he said, something *unnatural* in casting out comrades who, however perverse in their methods, wished to remain banded with us. It didn't feel Socialist-like. Had their object been to break away from the League, as indeed in consistency to their principles they ought to have done, the position would have been quite different. Besides, he felt within himself that should it ever come to a choice with him between having to rank himself on the side of parliamentarianism

or on the side of anarchism, he would unhesitatingly choose the former.

Morris' apprehensions about anarchism were deep and instinctive. He dreaded the doctrine all the more because he agreed with Anarchists in a great measure in their general affirmation of freedom, and in their belief in voluntary as opposed to compulsory co-operation. But their denial of social authority and discipline, their strong assertion of individual rather than of social rights, their emphasis of the sovereignty or autonomy of the individual, and their constant tendency to view society as the enemy instead of the friend of man, and, while declaring men to be on the whole individually good and trustworthy, at the same time ceaselessly to rail against organised society as inherently wicked and tyrannical, were notions alien alike to his temperament and his reason. He had no patience with the idea that men, apart from the environment of society—its education, customs, and co-operation—were naturally unselfish, amiable, or God-like creatures; nor that 'free' from organised society they could attain any human eminence or happiness. Neither the 'freedom' of Rousseau's 'Man in a State of Nature,' nor that of Thoreau's 'Solitude in the Woods,' appealed to him. He saw that all things that pleased him in life—work, art, literature, fellowship, civic courage and social custom—were the outcome of men associating with, not of men separating themselves from, their fellows, either in work or woe.

In fine, he was a Socialist, not an Anarchist. He believed that man was a social being whose welfare depended on the welfare of Society and on his sharing in its common rights and freedom, not on his striving to assert his own separate powers or inclinations.

Nevertheless, Morris liked many of the Anarchists personally. He shared, as I have said, their desire for freedom as against all class or arbitrary rule. In many ways, too, he shared with men like Edward Carpenter and Bernard Shaw their disregard of habits and conventions

that belonged to obsolete social or religious systems and prevented the freer growth of individual initiative and variety in life. Nor had he hitherto found much difficulty in working with Anarchists on a common platform. He had often addressed meetings with Kropotkin (and to the last remained his personal friend), with Mrs. C. M. Wilson, Louise Michel, and other pronounced Anarchists, and several of his colleagues in the Council of the League were decidedly Anarchist in their views. It had indeed been easier on the whole for him to get on with the Anarchists than with the parliamentarians, for the simple reason that the matter of parliamentary policy was involved in almost every practical question that arose, whereas Anarchism as a practical system was, or seemed to be, a question of the far future.

But already it was becoming evident to him and to other of the more observant members of the League in London and in the Provinces, that Anarchism was no longer an abstract theory merely. The Anarchist idea was gaining more and more adherents in the Party; and with their growth in numbers they were becoming increasingly bold in their efforts to apply their principles both within and without the organisation.

There was, in fact, a sort of current of Anarchism rising in the Socialist Movement—a current which a year or two later threatened to carry away with it a large part of the more active propagandists.

It was difficult just then to account for this circumstance. There appeared to be something mysterious in its origin and mode of diffusion. It was hardly to be ascribed to any circumstance in the political or industrial situation of the time. It was rather a reaction of influences within the Movement itself. Nowhere did Anarchism spring up spontaneously, so to speak, in the country, as Socialism so often did. It grew and spread only *within the Socialist Movement*, parasitically in the branches—a fact which accords with general experience of Anarchist propaganda in other countries.

Men are often what is described as 'born Socialists'—born, that is to say, with altruistic natures, abhorrent of all social wrong, and with minds easily attracted by Utopian ideas. Men are also often enough 'born individualists'—wholly obsessed, that is to say, with their own self-interests and desires. Men are never 'born Anarchists.' Anarchism is not an innate predisposition in man; it is an acquired state of mind, and a very unstable one usually. The Anarchist is either a Socialist who has got muddled with individualist ideas, or an individualist who has got muddled with Socialist ideas.

Undoubtedly the presence in the movement of a large element of foreign refugees, particularly from Russia and Poland and Spain, afforded Anarchism a stimulating soil for growth. These exiles, bred under Tsarist despotism, knowing government only as a machine of oppression, and possessing no attachment to British traditions of constitutional liberty, and often failing to acquire any deep sense of civic responsibility, were naturally disposed to favour 'autonomist' and insurrectionary ideas. It was amongst these people also that the police agents of foreign governments were for ever prowling for their victims.

And here, as events proved, we are near to the main source of the 'propaganda by deed' excitement which, under the name of Anarchism, so widely infected the movement at that period. That this Anarchist propaganda was organised and stimulated by police spies and *agents provocateurs*, admits of no doubt. The subsequent tragic incidents of the Walsall Anarchist bomb plot, and the revelations that then and afterwards ensued, especially in connection with the notorious Coulon, proved that for years the police had been at work devising Anarchist plots and inveigling dupes into their criminal net.

The Socialist League was, of course, particularly vulnerable to Anarchist propaganda, because of its avowedly revolutionary aims, and anti-parliamentary policy. Many of its members found it difficult to draw the line clearly

between the League principles and Anarchism, just as on the other hand many Fabians found no obstacle to their supporting Liberalism in opposition to Labour. Even Morris himself, clear as he was in his own mind as to the fundamental distinction and opposition of the two philosophies, could not always in precept or in practice separate them. Especially was this the case when dealing with his immediate associates at the headquarters of the League, some of whom he personally liked though disapproving their autonomist views and inflammatory utterances. The consequence was that already at the headquarters, as well as in some of the branches, Anarchistic ways of a disquieting nature were beginning to establish themselves.

The Anarchistic emphasis on no rules, no censorship, no 'bourgeois' morality, was, in fact, beginning to sap the stamina of certain of the branches and clubs; and a tendency was noticeable, not only of a lapsing from Socialist principles, but from moral standards. An affected bravado of 'do as you please and damn public opinion' was accepted as a substitute for any declaration or witness of Socialist conviction; and the specious catchword 'propaganda by deed,' which was beginning to allure some of the more earnest members from the drudgery of holding public meetings into dalliance with revolutionary heroics, was not always interpreted in a political sense. The Autonomie Club, becoming bolder and bolder, were about to issue a few years later (1894) leaflets entitled 'Vive le Vol' ('Long live Theft'), and even to justify theft not only on the part of the poor from the rich, but by comrades from comrades.

It was the apprehension aroused by these personal bizarre extravagances, more than their mere political intransigence, that vexed and repelled Morris. Strongly opposed as he was to the diversion of Socialist propaganda from its real object, 'the making of Socialists,' into attempts to excite insurrections that would only lead to fruitless blood-

shed, and head the nation back to sheer reaction, he was not really alarmed on that score. There was, he knew, not the least likelihood of the Anarchists succeeding in arousing any proletarian insurrection in this country. But he saw clearly that their present course must inevitably end in tragic consequences to some of themselves or to their dupes at the hands of the police, and that meanwhile their conduct was calculated to demoralise the movement, destroy the tradition, and deface the ideals of the Socialist cause.

Not that Morris desired that Socialism or Socialists should approve themselves to what is termed the nonconformist conscience. But he wished Socialism to approve itself to earnest-minded Socialists themselves, and to all good-hearted and right-headed men and women. He often said of himself that he was not a puritan; and in the customary or scoffing sense of the word he assuredly was not. But there was a sense in which it might be said of him that not only was he a puritan, but a puritan of the puritans. No man was more repelled by, or more sternly disapproved unsocial conduct, or actions that he regarded as dishonourable, base, ugly, or cruel. He had, it is true, no liking for asceticism, dinginess, or mere straitlacedness of any kind. Merry-making and jollity were after his own heart, and one of the constant affirmations in his writings was that only under Socialism could real merriment and joy in life abound. But feasting and mirth must be won by work and diligence in the needful duties of life; it must not be taken by idleness and thoughtless self-indulgence. With Bohemianism as a cult, or the bravado of hedonism, he had no sympathy whatever. Debauchery, blackguardism, idleness, and looseness of life he abominated, as greatly as he admired George Borrow, and revelled in 'Pickwick' and the fun and mischief of 'Huckleberry Finn,' precisely because they were expressions of strong, resourceful, or good-natured character, and protests against humdrum ways of life.

The men, as I have said, with whom Morris was most

closely associated in the official work of the League at that time were Joe Lane, Frank Kitz, and David J. Nicol. Lane was co-trustee with Morris of the *Commonweal*, Nicol was sub-editor, and Kitz was Secretary of the League.

Lane I hardly knew personally, having only met him once or twice at conferences. He was an intensely earnest man, but as I gathered, of a rather narrow, doctrinaire mind, who perpetually worried himself and others with his pet dogma—the iniquity of the State, and the necessity of the complete abolition of all political government. Nevertheless Morris had much respect for him.

Frank Kitz was of a wholly different mould. He was a dyer by trade, and had sometimes been employed by Morris at his Merton Abbey works. He was, I always understood, a fairly competent workman, but irregular in his habits. A sturdily made, bluff, breezy chap, fond of his beer and jolly company, and with something of originality in his composition, Morris liked him for a time and forgave him a thousand faults. There was a rough humour and wit in him, and a sort of perverse ingenuity of ideas, and bold aptness of phrase which made his talk and his public speaking attractive to the crowd. He was a rebel by temperament rather than Anarchist by philosophy. He was out for the social revolution rather than for Socialism, Communism or Anarchism. What precisely his idea of the social revolution was he never perhaps made quite clear.

In the pages of *To-Day* Bernard Shaw, who, like Morris, was attracted by Kitz's unconventional characteristics, devoted two amusing articles to a good-humoured sally on Kitz's revolutionary bluster.

David Nicol was yet another type. Possessed of a good education, and originally of some moderate means, he was drawn into the movement by his idealist tendencies. He had some literary gift, and one or two of his songs, such as the 'Workers' Marseillaise' and 'The Coming of the Light,'

have a glow of poetic fire in them. Kindly and gentle by nature, there was a strain of weakness in him mentally. He steeped his mind in clandestine literature, especially that dealing with the homicidal details of Government oppression and popular revolt, and became obsessed with the notion of arousing an insurrectionary working-class struggle in this country.

It was mainly into the hands of these three men, together with Charles Mowbray, whose whole Socialist career fell afterwards into disrepute as one who was at least the tool of police agents, that the control of the *Commonweal* and the League passed, when Morris and the Hammersmith branch broke off from the League. The result was inevitable.

There were still, it is true, a few members of the Anarchist-Communist type who gave no countenance to these eccentricities, but their example and reproof were alike disregarded. Morris showed all along, as we have seen, astonishing forbearance to his erring comrades. Even when they succeeded in capturing, as they did at the Annual Conference in 1889, the Council of the League, and he resigned from it and from the editorship of the *Commonweal*, he continued for many months to meet the deficit in the treasury to the tune of several hundred pounds. Eventually, however, the position became unendurable, and he cut off all supplies. Before doing so he discharged the debt of the paper and the League, leaving his comrades with not a penny of past debt to burden them. The League and the *Commonweal* between them exacted a tribute from him in donations and debt payments of at least £500 a year.

The after-history of the League is briefly told. The majority of the provincial branches, disagreeing with the Anarchist policy, ceased to send affiliation fees. The *Commonweal* became a monthly instead of a weekly publication, and an avowed organ of Anarchism. Police spies and *agents provocateurs* played their accustomed part.

Nicol, the editor of the *Commonweal*, got imprisoned for a seditious article, and later came the Walsall Anarchist Plot, which led to Fred Charles, Joe Deakin, and two others getting long terms of penal servitude. The chief instrument of this plot was Coulon, a spy in the pay of the French Government.

To this strangely inglorious and tragic end came the Socialist League, founded and inspired by the teaching, and made glorious by the genius of one of the most gifted of the sons of men.

CHAPTER XIV

LAST DAYS WITH MORRIS

My visits to Morris at Hammersmith had incidentally an interesting result in my own family circle. Among the more active members of the Hammersmith branch was Sam Bullock, the lecture secretary, between whom and myself grew up a close friendship. Bullock's business as a consulting engineer caused him to make frequent journeys to Scotland, in the course of which he usually visited me in Glasgow. This led eventually to his engagement and marriage to my sister Kitty in 1893, whose home henceforth was at Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith. Sam Bullock and my sister were often guests at Morris' Sunday evening supper parties. Sam had a humorous vein which Morris relished.

Meanwhile my own marriage, which took place at the same period, led to an abrupt change in the way of my life. My wife being as myself, we resolved to devote ourselves wholly to the work of the movement, setting forth together on our lifelong twain career as itinerant Socialist agitators. Our lecturing engagements henceforth led us both to make frequent visits to London, where my sister's home at Hammersmith became our headquarters. Thus a double link of attachment was now formed between the Hammersmith Socialist Society and myself.

Our first visit to Hammersmith after our marriage was during our honeymoon early in July 1893, when I introduced my wife to Morris, and received his benediction.

We were both booked to lecture at Kelmscott House, myself on the first Sunday of our visit, and my wife on the following Sunday. Though it was midsummer, and indoor meetings were hardly inviting, there was a crowded audience to hear my wife speak for the first time in the famous little hall. Morris himself postponed his going away to his country house at Kelmscott expressly to preside at the meeting, and made some warm-hearted remarks when introducing her to the gathering, congratulating both the movement and ourselves on our 'apostolic wedding.'

A rather droll incident occurred during the lecture. Among those seated with Morris on the platform was the venerable E. T. Craig, famous as one of the pioneers of the Co-operative Movement, and as the founder of the remarkable Ralahine Co-operative Colony in Ireland, which after a few years of extraordinary success came to grief owing to the bankruptcy and ruin of the proprietor of the land.

Mr. Craig was now over ninety years of age, and though frail in body was extraordinarily alert in mind, and full of enthusiasm for the new Socialist movement. His queer little cramped-up figure as he sat on the platform with a grey Scottish shepherd's plaid round his shoulders, contrasted drolly with the burly form of Morris, who, despite several warning turns of illness, still looked in the height of health and energy.

Unfortunately, Craig was exceedingly deaf, and had to make use of a huge ear-trumpet. The better to hear my wife he planted his chair close by her on the right, and held the unwieldy-looking instrument almost up to her face when she was speaking, much to her embarrassment. My wife, who has always claimed for herself considerable freedom of action on the platform, was obliged therefore severely to restrain her customary gestures, as no one present could fail to observe. Imagine, therefore, the amusement of the meeting when at the conclusion of her address, the quaint old veteran sprang to his feet and while compli-

menting the lecturer most gallantly on her address, expressed his great disappointment that she had not put 'more vigorous action into it.' 'I always like,' exclaimed he, 'to see orators, especially when they are young and full of life like our lecturer, throw their arms well about,' and in order to illustrate his idea, he swung his own arm, brandishing the ear-trumpet in a great sweep round him, so that both my wife and Morris had to throw themselves hastily back to avoid being struck by the weapon.

The subject of my wife's lecture was 'The Dearth of Joy,' and though I knew the lecture was one which Morris was likely to approve, I had a moment's misgiving over one of the passages in it. In the course of her remarks she alluded to certain signs of a growing moral and intellectual enfeeblement in literature and art, and instanced in contrast with the sorrows of the workers the exaggeration of merely aesthetic griefs and pains on the part of some of our modern poets and artists, mentioning Rossetti as an example. This allusion was not, I knew, prompted in any way by the circumstances of the meeting, as I had heard her make the same reference when delivering the lecture elsewhere. Knowing, however, as I did, Morris' sensitiveness about anything that seemed in the nature of disparagement of the Pre-Raphaelites, and remembering the consequences of an unfortunate remark of my own about Burne-Jones, of which I have spoken in a previous chapter, I felt a bit concerned lest Morris should take umbrage at her stricture on Rossetti.

My apprehension, however, proved a false alarm. So far from dissenting from her observation, Morris in his few concluding remarks expressed his entire accordance with her. 'I quite agree with the lecturer,' he said. 'We have surely enough very real and very terrible woes in modern life to evoke our sympathy and lamentation, without make-believing any fanciful ones. Those I am sure who have themselves experienced, or who have any knowledge whatever of such suffering as that endured by the poor miners

and their families during the recent lock-out, and who know what it is to see "little ones cry for bread" when bread for them there is none, are not likely to have much patience with poets who moan and melodise about their broken hearts (which, of course, are never broken) and the imaginary slights of their sweethearts or mistresses, especially when, as in so many instances, the sweethearts and mistresses are as fanciful creatures as the supposed heart-breaks.'

After the meeting Morris took us to supper—the company including my sister and brother-in-law, Sam Bullock, Philip Webb, Andreas Scheu, and several others. Morris (I may be pardoned the vanity of noting) was most attentive towards my wife, talking with her about her college and propaganda experiences. Recollecting that the decorations and furnishings of her college (Newnham) had been the work of the Morris Company, he inquired about their state of preservation, and was pleased to hear that they had proved durable and were appreciated by the students. He was greatly interested when he discovered that she had been brought up at Walthamstow, where he himself had been born, and inquired about some of the folk he remembered there, particularly a vehement old character, Farmer Hitchman.

Next day we came round at his request to see him for an hour in his study, when he showed my wife some of his literary treasures, and gave us as a wedding token a copy of one of his Kelmscott Press books in vellum, inscribed with our names.

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Morris was now entering upon the closing period of his life, of which only three years were yet to run. His career as an active worker in the Socialist movement was already virtually over. He had but recently given no little time and much earnest thought to the project of trying by means of a joint Socialist Committee to bring about

formal unity between the different sections of the movement. This Committee, which comprised delegates from the S.D.F., the Fabian Society, and the Hammersmith Socialist Society, and included, among others, Hyndman, Quelch, Shaw, Webb, Walter Crane, and Morris, after weeks of discussion drew up a united Socialist manifesto; but no practical result, however, came of it. Morris was greatly disappointed over the business. Though he never had much hopes of, or indeed belief in, what was termed 'Socialist Unity,' this further experience of factional prejudice and fruitless effort in connection with the mere mechanism of Socialist organisation, following upon the break-up of the League, was very discouraging to him. It closed up the only prospect then visible to him of forming a great Socialist Party with broad but definite and inspiring Socialist aims. True there was the new political Labour movement in which Socialists and Trade Unionists were combined, of which the recently formed Independent Labour Party (the I.L.P.) was the chief expression—but this movement, operating, as it did, mainly in the North, hardly came within his view in London. He was not in touch with its leaders, nor did he quite understand its Socialist position. His friends of the Social Democratic Federation had no good word to say of it, and his Fabian friends were hardly more sympathetic in their attitude towards it. What appeared to be its intensely electioneering character repelled him, though later on he came to form a more favourable and just opinion of its principles and objects.

Thus he felt isolated from the general throng of Socialist factions and forced back into his own idealist world, his still almost undiminished creative energies finding scope during this period of declining bodily vigour in his new printing schemes for the Kelmscott Press and in the writing of his splendid prose romances. To the last, however, he preserved his connection with the Hammersmith Socialist Society, keeping unbroken his comradeship with his old friends, and occasionally, as far as the state of his health

would allow, lecturing at Hammersmith and elsewhere in London and in provincial towns.

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One of his last links with the active propaganda of the movement was formed by the publication of the *Hammersmith Socialist Record*, a little monthly magazine, or rather tract, issued by the Hammersmith Socialist Society. The *Record* was begun shortly after Morris and the Society ceased their connection with the League and the *Commonweal*, as a means of voicing the distinctive Socialist views of the Society; and its trim little pages continued to receive articles and notes from his pen till its expiry in 1895. It was, I should think, entitled to the distinction of being the smallest and most homely Socialist publication in the country. Morris and myself were, as the editor, Sam Bullock, drolly put it, the 'chief contributors' and sometimes the only ones, and it is pleasant to me to think that I was privileged by means of this little publication to collaborate with Morris in the forlorn journalism of Socialist propaganda, even 'unto this last.'

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The last occasion on which I met Morris was in August 1895, about a year before his death. My wife and I were on a visit to my sister and brother-in law at Hammersmith. We all four attended the Sunday evening meeting at Kelmscott House—Herbert Burrows being the lecturer on that occasion—and had a merry supper afterwards. Morris asked me to come round next morning for a chat, inviting my wife to join us later for lunch.

Morris had then but recently recovered from the most serious illness of his life, and was noticeably weak and out of trim. He only briefly alluded to his illness, however, and that, as I thought, in a spirit of humbleness. He wanted, he said, to talk to me about the movement, especially in the North. Did I think it was making progress? What did I think about the I.L.P.? Was it aiming genuinely

for Socialism? I answered his questions reassuringly, explaining how that my wife and I were now putting our whole energy into the new party, the I.L.P., and frankly avowing that I had abandoned my old Socialist League opinions against parliamentary action. He listened to my *apologia* attentively, sitting back in his chair smoking, keeping his eyes fixed on me reflectively while I spoke. He told me, what doubtless, he said, I had gathered from his more recent letters to me, that he himself had now realised that revolutionary Socialism was impossible in England—the working class were too deeply attached by temperament as well as by tradition to compromise and progressive politics to pursue with any genuine zeal abstract principles or revolutionary methods of change. Perhaps they were wiser than we were, even if their wisdom was only what Grant Allen called 'animal instinct.' Animal instinct was quite as likely to be right as armchair philosophy. Anyway they knew their own capacities better than we did. He had, he said, resumed friendly relations with the leaders of the S.D.F., but he still disliked much of their spirit and many of their political methods. He asked me about Keir Hardie, and was manifestly pleased to hear me speak warmly and trustfully of him. 'I have had, I confess, rather my doubts about him,' he said, 'because of his seeming absorption in mere electioneering schemes, but his fight for the unemployed has had something great in it.'

He spoke also of Robert Blatchford, whose extraordinary popularity as a journalist and as the author of 'Merrie England' and editor of *The Clarion* was then uprising. He had heard, he said, a good deal about the remarkable influence of Blatchford's writings among the factory workers in the North. That, he thought, was a most encouraging sign, for he seemed to have a true grip of Socialism, and appeared to possess the faculty of understanding the mind of the working class and of being understood by them. He (Blatchford) had been to see him at Kelmscott House, and they had had an interesting talk

together, though Blatchford seemed rather a taciturn man. 'He is a queerish, black-looking chap,' Morris remarked. 'But I'm not sure he came quite out of his shell.'

He inquired about what our old League comrades in Scotland were doing, the Rev. Dr. Glasse, John Gilray, and others in Edinburgh, Webster, Leatham in Aberdeen, and Muirhead, Joe Burgoyne, Sandy Haddow, Dr. Stirling Robertson, and others in Glasgow. I was struck with the distinctness which these far-away and but seldom seen comrades had in his mind.

He showed me, I remember, a letter in MS. he had written to the *Athenæum* or *Academy* (I forget on what subject), and I had no little delight in pointing out the word 'paralel' and several similar misspellings in it, as he had reprimanded me for my own misspelling on a recent occasion. 'Oh,' he said, 'I don't profess to spell correctly—spell, that is to say, according to rule. Spelling and grammar were made for man, not man for spelling and grammar.'

On my wife joining us he brought in cider and cakes, as we both had to go into the City early, and could not wait for lunch. He displayed a number of new designs for the Kelmscott Press, saying he was greatly pleased with them, and speaking, as always, with affectionate admiration of his collaborator, Burne-Jones. I asked if Burne-Jones was getting at all inclined towards Socialism. He shrugged his shoulders. 'The Trafalgar Square riots terrified him against Socialism at the outset,' he said. 'If only we could guarantee that the Social Revolution would not burn down the National Gallery he might almost be persuaded to join us, I think. But who is going to guarantee what the people, or, for that matter, the soldiers, will do or will not do, should ever the flames of revolution burst forth?'

As we arose to go I alluded to an article by him which had appeared with his photograph in the January number of the *Labour Prophet*—the organ of the new Labour Church movement. I said that some of his old friends

were surprised to see him writing in what they regarded as a religious publication, and hoped he was not becoming evangelical! He explained that he had been urged to write something about Socialism for that journal because the Labour Church movement reached many earnest-minded people who were averse from the anti-religious tone of so much of our Socialist literature. He did not know what the theological views of the Labour Church were, but he understood that the idea was to push Socialism on religious lines, and he thought that was useful and in sympathy with many kindly folks' difficulties. Anti-religious bigotry was twin brother to religious bigotry, and the Socialist movement had suffered from it. He meant the article to be a frank reconsideration of his anti-parliamentary attitude, and hoped he had made his position in that respect quite clear.

In my diary notes written at the time, I find against this date (August 26, 1895) simply the laconic word 'Good-bye,' though I had no thought at the time that it might prove our last meeting. But I remember that at the gate he held my hand longer than was his custom, and said 'I have been greatly cheered by what you say about Keir Hardie and the Labour movement. Our theories often blind us to the truth.' Then, laying his hand on my shoulder, he said 'Ah, lad! if the workers are *really* going to march—won't we all fall in! Again, good-bye, and good luck.'

These were, I think, the last words I ever heard from his lips.

A few months later I stayed for a few days with my sister at Hammersmith, but knowing that he was exceedingly ill, and that it had been made known that he was unable to see any visitors, I did not call at Kelmscott House, greatly as I longed to do so. Yet I could not leave Hammersmith without getting as near to him as I could. So one day I went round to the Mall, and sat for an hour under the elm tree on the bastion overlooking the river in front of the house. Prayer was not a means of expressing emotion

with me in those days, yet as I thought of William Morris lying ill somewhere within that house, a flood of supplication that he might not be in pain, and might get well again, filled my heart. I looked at the library window, and could just catch a glance of the book-shelves. How sacred that room was! What priceless treasures were there! What wonderful memories were enshrined in it of him and of his superb comradeship! I looked out on the river and recalled his description of the scene in 'News from Nowhere,' and I recalled also how when he was writing that book I told him that I had fallen in love with Ellen, and he said he had fallen in love with her himself! 'Oh, and I shan't give her up to you—not without a tussle for her anyway,' he said, with a smile, but almost jealously, I thought. I found it hard to come away, not daring even to knock at the door, lest it might seem as if I wished to intrude on his seclusion.

He recovered from this attack of illness, but his frame was completely shaken by it, and he was never well again.

On Sunday, August 9, 1896, I again, and for the last time, lectured at Kelmscott House. Morris was then away by his doctor's advice on a cruise to Spitzbergen with his friend John Carruthers, in the forlorn hope of regaining his health, and there was a subdued and inert air about the place. My lecture raised a brisk discussion in the meeting, but the debaters were mostly young men, newcomers into the movement. Robert Blatchford and E. F. Fay (the 'Bounder' of *The Clarion*), with whom I was at that time intimately associated, came with me to the meeting, and Blatchford said a few words, but none of the old warriors unsheathed their blades. Already the old Kelmscott régime seemed passing away. After the meeting, instead of our having supper in the house, we had supper at my sister's, and made merry till the morning hours; but the thought that he 'My Captain, O My Captain' was fading away, haunted my mirth. He returned from his cruise in no wise benefited by it

Two months later, on Saturday, October 3, 1896, William Morris died. I read the news in the *Umpire* next day in Bury, where I was lecturing—a dreary wet day in a dismal town. I spent next day in J. R. Clynes' house in Oldham, writing a memorial notice of him for the *Labour Leader*, my pages stained with many a tear. The sun of my Socialist firmament had gone out. It seemed as though the colour and music had gone out of my life also. I felt bereft and forlorn. For ten years his friendship over my 'living head like heaven was bent.'

To me he was the greatest man in the world.

In my diary for October 4, I find it noted: 'Socialism seems all quite suddenly to have gone from its summer into its winter time. William Morris and Kelmscott House no more!'

CHAPTER XV

HIS SOCIALISM: FELLOWSHIP AND WORK

In an earlier chapter I recalled how Morris, when he first met us in Glasgow, had flatly declared his indifference to Marx's theory of value, or any other dogmas of political economy. Yet in an interview published a year or two later in *Cassell's Saturday Magazine*, Morris was reported to have said that he had been led towards Socialism by Ruskin's teaching and his own artistic feeling, but that it was the reading of Marx's 'Capital' that had finally made him a convinced Socialist. This statement rather surprised me, and on visiting him shortly afterwards in London I referred to the article, and asked him if it was true that Marx had influenced in an important way his Socialist ideas.

'I don't think the *Cassell's Magazine* chap quite put it as I gave it him,' Morris replied; 'but it is quite true that I put some emphasis on Marx—more than I ought to have done, perhaps. The fact is that I have often tried to read the old German Israelite, but have never been able to make head or tail of his algebraics. He is stiffer reading than some of Browning's poetry. But you see most people think I am a Socialist because I am a crazy sort of artist and poet chap, and I mentioned Marx because I wanted to be upsides with them and make believe that I am really a tremendous Political Economist—which, thank God, I am not! I don't think I ever read a book on Political Economy in my life—barring, if you choose to call it such, Ruskin's "Unto This Last"—and I'll take precious good care I never will!'

This strong disclaimer, though it smacks of that droll exaggeration in which Morris in a whimsical way sometimes indulged, expresses nevertheless the essential truth respecting his Socialist persuasion. Morris was a Socialist by reason of his whole intellectual and moral construction, and whatever circumstances eventually led him to realise and to proclaim himself a Socialist—and there were doubtless many—his Socialism was none the less a necessary expression of his whole nature.

His Socialism was of the Communist type, and he himself belonged to the old Utopian school rather than to the modern Scientific Socialist school of thought. It is true that occasionally he used distinctively Marxist phrases in his lectures, and so gave the impression that he accepted in the main the Scientific Socialist position. This was notably the case in that most unsatisfactory series of chapters, 'Socialism, from the Root Up,' which he wrote for the *Commonweal* in 1886–88 jointly with Belfort Bax, or rather, which, as he himself said, Bax wrote and he said ditto to. They were afterwards republished in book-form under the title, 'Socialism: its Growth and Outcome.' But no one who knew him personally, or was familiar with the general body of his writings, could fail to perceive that these Marxist ideas did not really belong to his own sphere of Socialist thought, but were adopted by him because of their almost universal acceptance by his fellow Socialists, and because he did not feel disposed to bother about doctrines which, whether true or false, hardly interested him. One perceives, especially in the case of 'Socialism, from the Root Up,' that dogmatism about the evolution of the family or the logical sequence of economic changes does not come within the range of Morris' line of Socialist vision. This he as good as acknowledged once when he said, alluding playfully to Bax's visits while they were writing the book together, 'I am going to undergo compulsory Baxination again to-day.'

His general conception of Socialism was formed in his

mind before he came into touch with the Socialist movement, or with Socialists at all. In his Art lectures, delivered as early as 1878, we find passages in which the essentials of his after-teaching of Socialism are clearly set forth.

In saying that Morris' Socialism was Utopian rather than Scientific, I mean that his Socialism was not derived from any logical inferences from economic analyses of industrial history, but from his whole conception of life. He did not concern himself so much with the science of wealth, or rather money-making, as with the art of living. While ordaining absolute equality of wealth conditions for all as essential to the realisation of the Co-operative Commonwealth, he regarded all readjustments of economic conditions as a means to an end rather than as ends in themselves. The great object of Socialism was to place all men and women on a footing of equality and brotherhood in order that they might one and all have the utmost possible freedom to live the fullest and happiest lives. The selfish striving for gain, the fettering of one's fellow-men in order to benefit by their oppression or misfortune, the ambition for personal superiority or privilege of any kind, were motives wholly abhorrent to his nature.

He did not regard mere quantity of riches or wealth as being important objects of Socialism. Though in no degree favouring asceticism or parsimony of living, he nevertheless believed that in the main the greater the simplicity of our mode of living, the greater would be the happiness and the nobler the achievements of our lives. This idea is expressed in all his descriptions of what he pictured as ideal conditions of fellowship and work—as, for example, in his song 'The Day is Coming,' in his lectures on 'Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil,' and 'How we live, and how we might live,' and in his 'John Ball' and 'News from Nowhere.'

So much indeed was he out of sympathy with all mere stuffing of life with furniture, so to speak, with all elabora-

tion of devices for cramming life with luxuries and excitements, that he avowed with the utmost sincerity his preference for the humblest sort of cottage life to that of the millionaire splendour of Park Lane or of the most desirable mansions of Villadom. Referring to his visit, in 1884, to Edward Carpenter's little farm at Millthorpe, he wrote: 'I went to Chesterfield and saw Edward Carpenter on Monday, and found him sensible and sympathetic at the same time. I listened with longing heart to his account of his patch of ground, seven acres: He says that he and his fellow can almost live on it: they grow their own wheat and send flowers and fruit to Chesterfield and Sheffield markets: all sounds very agreeable to me. It seems to me that a very real way to enjoy life is to accept all its necessary ordinary details and turn them into pleasures by taking interest in them: whereas modern civilisation huddles them out of the way, has them done in a venal and slovenly manner till they become real drudgery which people can't help trying to avoid. Whiles I think, as a vision, of a decent community as a refuge from our mean squabbles and corrupt society; but I am too old now, even if it were not dastardly to desert.'

Nor was his repulsion from luxury, extravagance, and superfluity of material wealth, and his longing for downrightly simple and even arduous conditions of life a merely occasional or passing frame of mind. Again and again in his discourses on Art and Labour does he affirm his belief that the farther we go from the cottage and the nearer to the palace, the farther we banish ourselves from the sweetest and noblest joys of life. 'Art was not born in the palace, rather she fell sick there,' he said in one of his earliest addresses, and unceasingly in his Art lectures he appealed against the whole plutocratic conception of life. Here are a few sentences culled at random from his lectures in which he puts his plea for simplicity of life into almost axiomatic phrase:

'That which alone can produce popular art among

us is living a simple life. Once more I say that the great foe of art (and life) is luxury.'

'Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.'

'Simplicity of life, even the barest, is not a misery, but the very foundation of refinement. A sanded floor and white-washed walls, and the green trees and flowering meads and living waters outside; or a grimy palace amid the smoke with a regiment of housemaids always working to smear dirt together so that it may be unnoticed; which, think you, is the most refined and the most fit for a gentleman of those two dwellings?'

'There are two virtues much needed in modern life if it is ever to become sweet, and I am quite sure they are absolutely necessary in sowing the seed of an *art which is to be made by the people, as a happiness to the maker and user.* These are honesty and simplicity of life.' ('The Art of the People.')

'I have never been in a rich man's house which would not have looked better for having a bonfire made outside of it of nine-tenths of all it held.' (*Ibid.*)

'Luxury cannot exist without slavery of some kind or other, and its abolition would be blessed, like the abolition of other slaveries, by the freeing of both the slaves and their masters.' (*Ibid.*)

Perhaps the most distinctive as well as the most prophetic part of his teaching was his exaltation of work. No other writer, ancient or modern, that I know of, has so glorified work for its own sake. If ever man can be said to have believed in work as the greatest human pleasure and as the highest form of worship, it was he. In this respect his teaching stands out almost as uniquely from the teaching in prevalent Socialist literature as from that of literature generally. Both Carlyle and Ruskin had, it is true, proclaimed the nobility of work; but there was in their axioms a preceptorial and disciplinary note. Work with them has still something of the Old Testament penitential curse upon

it. With Morris there is no such detraction. Ever and ever again he dwells upon the idea that work is the greatest boon of life, not simply because work is necessary for the sustenance of life—what is necessary may yet be painful and irksome—but because it is in itself a good and joyous thing; because it is the chief means whereby man can express his creative powers, and give to his fellows the gifts of his affection and diligence.

Underneath much of the prevalent teaching of Socialism, especially that of Marxist propagandists, as in the teaching of the Book of Genesis, there lurks the notion that work is from its very nature an oppressive and hateful obligation, to be borne at least as a burden, as a price to be paid for the privilege of life. One feels when reading many of the leading expositions of Socialism that we should want, were such a thing possible, to free the workers not only from the present conditions of work, but from work altogether. In other words, there clings to Socialist teaching the idea—the Capitalist idea, it might be called—that work is in its nature a servitude and oppression, and that the ideal of complete social emancipation would be that we should all be able to live without work—live, that is to say, as 'ladies and gentlemen' without having to do any work at all!

So far from regarding work in that light, so far from looking upon work as being in itself an evil, an undesirable or penitential task, Morris held work to be the highest, the most God-like of all human capacities. Without work life would cease to have any meaning or yield any noble happiness at all. Hear him:

'The hope of pleasure in work itself: how strange that hope must seem to some of my readers—to most of them! Yet I think to all living things there is a pleasure in the exercise of their energies and that even the beasts rejoice in being lithe and swift and strong. But a man at work, making something which he feels will exist because he is working at it and wills it, is exercising the energies of his mind and soul as well as of his body. Memory and

imagination help him as he works. Not only his own thoughts, but the thoughts of past ages guide his hand, and as part of the human race, he creates. If we work thus we shall be men, and our days in the world will be happy and eventful.'

And again, writing in the *Commonweal* on Bellamy's 'Looking Backward,' he says: 'Mr. Bellamy worries himself unnecessarily in seeking, with obvious failure, some incentive to labour to replace the fear of starvation which at present is the only one; whereas it cannot be too often repeated that the true incentive to useful and happy labour is, and must be, pleasure in the work itself.'

That single sentence, as Mr. Mackail rightly observes, contains the essence of all his belief in politics, in economics, in art. I doubt if he ever delivered a lecture without reaffirming it as a cardinal principle of his Socialist faith. It might indeed be said that it was from his perception of the direful blight which the degradation of labour has upon the whole tree of life, and his abounding hope in the regeneration of life, which the uplifting of labour to its true dignity and delight would bring, that all his Socialist aspirations sprang. Thus in 1879, several years before he saw his way into the path of Socialist agitation, we find him declaring in an address on 'The Art of the People' to the Birmingham Art students: 'If a man has work to do which he despises, which does not satisfy his natural and rightful desire for pleasure, the greater part of his life must pass unhappily and without self-respect. Consider, I beg of you, what that means, and what ruin must come of it in the end. . . . The chief duty of the civilised world to-day is to set about making labour happy for all, and to do its utmost to minimise unhappy labour.'

We also find him in what was almost his last Socialist testament, 'News from Nowhere,' giving final emphasis to this principle. My readers will know how in that Utopian romance he makes old Hammond reply to his visitor from the nineteenth century, who expresses astonishment that

the people in the new epoch of Rest work without special reward for their labour : .

'No reward of labour !' exclaimed Hammond. 'The reward of labour is life. Is that not enough ? The reward of creation. The wages which God gets, as people might have said long time agone. If you are going to be paid for the pleasure of creation, which is what excellence in work means, the next thing we shall hear of will be a bill sent for the creation of children.'

But the visitor objects that in the nineteenth century it would have been said that there is a natural desire towards the procreation of children, and a natural desire not to work. Whereupon Hammond scouts that as an ancient platitude, and wholly untrue, and explains that in the Communist Commonwealth 'all work is now made pleasurable either because of the hope of gain in honour and wealth with which the work is done, which causes pleasurable excitement, even when the work is not pleasant ; or else because it has grown into a pleasurable *habit*, as is the case with what you call mechanical work ; and lastly (and most of the work is of this kind) because there is a conscious sensuous pleasure in work itself ; it is done, that is, by artists.'

And this exaltation of work from being, as in the old world, a servitude and an irksome toil, into a pleasurable creation and art, Morris speaks of as being a far greater and more important change than all the other changes concerning crime, politics, property, and marriage which Socialism will achieve.

He was not, as is commonly thought, opposed to the use of machinery or labour-saving inventions. On the contrary, he strongly urged that all merely laborious and monotonous work should, as far as possible, be done by machinery.[1] He even denied that machinery was necessarily distasteful from an Art point of view. 'It is,' he said,

[1] See particularly his lectures on 'How we live, and how we might live' and 'Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil' in his *Signs of Change*.

'the allowing machines to be our masters and not our servants that so injures the beauty of life nowadays.' But he did not in the least rejoice at the prospect of supplanting generally the energies of the mind and the skill of the hands by universal ingenuities of mechanism. That way led, he felt, to the eventual decay, not only of our physical faculties, but of our imagination and our moral powers. For this reason the conception of Socialism and life given in Bellamy's 'Looking Backward' filled him with horror. He was not blind to the many merits of that book—the admirable desire to solve practical problems of wealth distribution, and the wonderful fertility of its suggestions for ensuring social justice and equality all round. But he simply could not abide the notion that the object of Socialism was not only to get rid of the present inequalities of work and reward, but to get rid as far as possible of any occasion for work and exertion altogether, and thereby to reduce life so far as possible to a passive experience of sensory and intellectual excitement.

It was in protest against Bellamy's 'Looking Backward' with its notion of making civilisation a mere emporium of artificial contrivances, and life a cram of sensuous experiences, that he wrote his 'News from Nowhere.' He was greatly disturbed by the vogue of Bellamy's book. In one of his letters to me at the time he said 'I suppose you have seen or read, or at least tried to read, "Looking Backward." I *had* to on Saturday, having promised to lecture on it. Thank you, I wouldn't care to live in such a cockney paradise as he imagines!' and in an early issue of the *Commonweal* he wrote a formal criticism of the book.

Sam Bullock tells me that he remembers calling, as lecture secretary of the Hammersmith Branch, on Morris one Saturday afternoon, to ask him to lecture in the Kelmscott meeting-room on the Sunday evening in place of the appointed lecturer, who was unable to come. Morris objected that he had nothing new to lecture about, and had already spoken there on any subject upon which he could

find anything to say. Bullock suggested that he might make a few comments on Bellamy's book—which Morris told him he had just read. Morris brightened at the suggestion and on the Sunday evening gave a running commentary on the book, incidentally introducing by way of contrast some of his own ideas of how people might live and work in 'a new day of fellowship, rest, and happiness.' Doubtless it was this lecture which gave him the idea of writing 'News from Nowhere,' which immediately afterwards began to appear in weekly instalments in the *Commonweal*, and was intended as a counterblast to 'Looking Backward.' It was written for the most part in hurried snatches when travelling by train to and from the City.

Morris never intended, however, 'News from Nowhere' to be regarded as a serious plan or conspectus of Socialism, and was both surprised and amused when he found the little volume solemnly discussed as a text-book of Socialist politics, economics, and morality. The story was meant to be a sort of Socialist *jeu d'esprit*—a fancy picture, or idyll, or romance. It is unlikely that Morris, while deprecating the assumption in 'Looking Backward' that we can forecast the regulations and details of a future society, would himself fall into that very error.

Yet one meets with readers of 'News from Nowhere' who appear to be possessed with the idea that such whimsicalities in the story as the conversion of the present buildings of the Houses of Parliament into a manure depot, the free provision of all manner of fancifully carved tobacco pipes, and the going about of road-dustmen in gorgeous medieval raiment, constitute prime factors in Morris' conception of the Socialist Commonwealth! Nevertheless the book contains not only delightful descriptions of the beautiful stretches of the Thames Valley and charming delineations of men and women moving amidst most pleasant circumstances of life and industry, but pages of dialogue and reflection that reveal the richest thoughts of his mind and the

deepest feelings of his heart. Ellen, his hostess of the Guest House, 'her face and hands and bare feet tanned quite brown with the sun,' is surely one of the most exquisite creations in prose literature, and where else have we so vividly pictured the transience of modern civilisation and the permanence of the loveliness of England as in the description of the guest's journey together with Ellen in the boat up the Thames?

CHAPTER XVI

CHARACTERISTICS : HIS PUBLIC SPEAKING

MORRIS was not what is called an orator or eloquent speaker. He was not reckoned among the front-rank speakers of the movement, though the high quality of the substance of his lectures, and the charm of his manner of speech, were generally recognised. In none of the biographical notices of him that I have seen is his platform speaking appraised among his chief accomplishments. His defect in oratory was not, needless to say, owing to any lack of intensity of feeling, or to any dearth of ideas, or command of language on his part. Nor can it be ascribed to the want of sufficient practice on the platform ; for he must have addressed many hundreds of meetings in the course of his public career.

His lack of oratory belonged to the mould of his nature. This is easily discerned. His poetry no less than his prose writing showed that the absence in him of florid and emotional speech was a fundamental fact of his temperament and genius. Whether this characteristic is to be reckoned a merit or demerit in him is a matter of individual judgment. There are many who will consider it wholly to the good of his work and fame. For, as we all know, rhetoric and declamatory expression of all kinds have fallen nowadays into disrepute among almost all who pretend to art or literary culture. In this respect modern aesthetic feeling among the cultured classes is quite at variance with that of the ancient Greeks (as distinct from a few heretics like Plato), as it also is with modern popular taste. Rhetoric, or, at

any rate, platform oratory, as is witnessed by the fact of the great vogue of eloquent preachers, and the huge crowds that assemble to listen to famous political speakers, irrespective of creed or party, is apparently as attractive to our present-day 'unsophisticated' fellow citizens as it was alike to the cultured and to the uncultured populace of Periclean Athens.

For myself, whom my readers may by now suspect of grudging any detraction whatever from Morris' excellences, I may as well make a clean breast of it, and confess that I am by no means persuaded that the gift of oratory or of eloquent and ornate writing is a spurious one, or is in any way allied to weakness of conviction or insincerity of mind. Fools and knaves are by no means always eloquent or even loquacious. Nor have I found—and this with me is a test example—that the more eloquent of our Socialist propagandists, or for that matter of politicians and preachers generally, are less reliable in thought, or in word, or in deed than their less eloquent brothers. Nor does history testify against the gift of 'tongues.' Many of the noblest teachers and reformers, heroes and masters, were men and women of powerful and attractive eloquence. Pericles, St. Paul, St. Dominic, Savonarola, Luther, and notable publicists in recent days, such as Ernest Jones, John Bright, Wendell Phillips, Colonel Ingersoll, Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant, Spurgeon, Jean Jaurès, all of them were remarkable orators; and no one would, I think, say that they were insincere or unreliable in character or speech. And I confess further that for myself, not only good oratory on the platform but eloquence and occasionally sheer rhetoric in writing have much charm. I am among those who can take whole-hearted delight in some of the more rhetorical passages of poetry which can be found, for example, in Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, and Victor Hugo. I shall even avow that where, rarely though it be, Morris himself seems to verge on the borderline of rhetoric, as in some parts of his 'John Ball' and his 'Aims of Art,' and perhaps,

too, in some of his Socialist chants, I feel he is attaining the very highest pitch of sincerity of expression.

But having said that Morris was not an orator, and without judging this to be either a merit or a defect in him, I must hasten to say that his public speaking, to those who had ears to hear, was one of the finest things to listen to that could be heard on an English platform. It was so like what one expected of him, so characteristic of the man, so interesting in substance and manner, and withal so fresh, so natural and uneffortful, and full of personal flavour. It was as different from the customary platform oratory as a mountain spring is from a garden fountain. His speech did not come with a great rush and dazzling spray, bounding high above the natural level of common speech, but welled up easily and naturally, forming a fresh, translucent pool, and making its way, not as a sluice or channel, but tracking out its own course. It was conversational rather than oratorical, with breaks and pauses corresponding to the natural working of his thoughts. His voice, though not of deep compass, was distinctively male, fairly strong and flexible, but not loud or of great range ; not noticeably sonorous, but never shrill, and always most pleasant to hear. Occasionally he paused for the right word, or appeared to grope his way for a moment, but he never stumbled in his sentences, or got tangled or lost in his argument. He was characteristically inclined, except when reasoning closely or dealing with the gravest subjects, to break into a humorous vein, and to express himself with a whimsical gesture or frank expletive. He did not harangue his audiences, or preach, or teach them, but spoke to them as a man to his friends or neighbours and as one on their own level of intelligence and good-will. As I have said elsewhere, the English language had a new tune on his tongue, and when moved by deep feeling there was a cadence or chant in his voice that was sweet and good to hear.

But these things do not fully explain the secret of the peculiar power and charm of Morris' platform speech.

If he was not an orator, he had something that was greater than oratory, though I find it hard to define what I mean by that saying. Perhaps the prime quality of his speaking was its veracity. I mean by that the quality of saying precisely no more and no less in words or in the emotion or colour imparted to the words than the speaker thinks, feels, or wishes to say. He expressed what was in his mind as exactly as words could do. Except occasionally in conversation or private correspondence when in an expletive or whimsical mood, he never indulged in over-emphasis or hyperbole, as Carlyle and Ruskin so often did. His meaning was never overmastered by his words—was never encumbered or cloyed by conventional phrase or literary jargon, or unduly heightened or barbed by metaphor or epigram. Yet on the other hand he unhesitatingly used the commonest idioms and tritest sayings when these adequately expressed what he wished to say. His integrity of utterance in this respect, both in writing and in speaking, was, considering the custom of exaggerated and over-emphasised expression in literature and public speech, truly remarkable. This temperance and probity of speech is one of the rarest qualities among educated and literary people. Only amongst the simpler-minded and stronger-natured type of the working class, especially among northern countryfolk, can it be found, and then far from commonly.

There was yet another quality in Morris as a speaker or teacher which I may perhaps touch upon here, though it belongs rather to the substance of his teaching than his manner of speech. From the first time I heard him lecture I was aware, though unable to say why, that there was something in his attitude towards his hearers, something, too, in his vein of feeling towards the world in which we dwell, that was different from that customary with speakers in public address. What was it? I tried to define it to myself, but was puzzled.

On one occasion when he was addressing an open-air meeting at Glasgow Green gates, I was struck so forcibly

with this characteristic, whatever it might be, that I fixed in my mind several passages that seemed to me to be particularly distinctive of the posture of his mind towards the audience. I give one or two of them as nearly word for word as I can remember :

'I feel quite at home in addressing you here in Glasgow this afternoon. It is just such a meeting as this that I am accustomed to address when at home in London on Sundays. I find before me here just the same type of audience, mostly working men, looking by no means particularly happy and, if you will forgive my saying so, by no means particularly well-fed or well-clothed. And I feel that what I have to say to you this afternoon is just what I should feel compelled to say were I speaking instead at Hammersmith Bridge or in Hyde Park in London.

'Coming along to the meeting this afternoon our comrade the secretary was telling me that there is a distressing amount of unemployment in Glasgow, and that huge unemployed demonstrations have been held. That is just what is told me wherever I go to speak. And I never hear, or read, or think about it but my blood boils, and indignation rises in my heart, against the whole system of what is so proudly called "modern civilisation."

'I can speak, perhaps, on this subject of work with less prejudice or personal bias than most men. I am neither what you would call a working man nor an idle rich man, though in a way I am a bit of both—with, as some folk might say, the bad qualities of both and the good qualities of neither ! I am, as some of you know, a literary man and an artist of a kind. I work both with my head and my hands : but not from compulsion as most of you and my comrades here do, nor merely as a sort of rich man's pastime, as doubtless some of the Dukes do. I have never known what I fear many of you unfortunately have known, actual poverty—the pain of to-day's hunger and cold, and the fear of to-morrow's, or the dread of a master's voice, or the hopeless despair of unemployment. I have, I truly believe, lived as happy a

life as anyone could wish to live, save for the misery of seeing so much cruel wrong and needless suffering around me. Yet I am no more entitled to that happiness than any of my fellows.

'One of your university men was lamenting to me this morning that the working class in Scotland were more and more taking to cheap periodical literature and shoddy professional music-hall jingles, to the neglect of your beautiful vernacular Scottish songs and the works of Walter Scott and other good writers. And it is, don't you think, a lamentable thing that the literary taste of the people should, despite the fact of the spread of what is called Education, or perhaps largely in consequence of it, be turning away from one of the few wholesome and beautiful things of the past now left us, to the silly and trashy and mostly vile stuff written and published nowadays merely as a means of money-grabbing.

'In England they have a beautiful custom in the churches of celebrating the gathering of the harvest by having a special thanksgiving service, on which occasion the churches are decorated with flowers, and the altar laden with all manner of fruits, grains, and vegetables. I suppose you have a similar custom in Scotland. The custom indeed seems to be observed in all parts of the world, by peoples of all races and all creeds.

'A friend and comrade of mine, a master engineer, who has carried out great engineering schemes in South America, tells me that in dealing with the natives there, it is much more important to treat or seem to treat them kindly—humanly, that is to say—than even to treat them justly. If, for example, when asked to do something—help, say, in finding cattle, food, or material—they are asked rather as friends than as inferiors, they will respond far more willingly, even if the task is an unduly hard one. So also, if when paying them for any work or purchases, miserable though the payment may be, if what is given them is given in a cheerful way, as though acknowledging a favour rather

than conferring one, the natives will hardly think of counting what they receive or of disputing as to the amount due.'

Such are a few snatches from his address on the occasion referred to. Readers of his art lectures and his political addresses will recall many passages attuned on a kindred personal note. There is, for example, the striking personal apologia in his lecture on 'Art and the Beauty of the Earth.'

'Look you, as I sit at my work at home, which is at Hammersmith close to the river, I often hear go past the window some of the ruffianism of which a good deal has been said in the papers of late, and has been said before at recurring periods. As I hear the yells and shrieks and all the degradation cast on the glorious tongue of Shakespeare and Milton, and I see the brutal, reckless faces and figures go past me, it rouses in me recklessness and brutality also, and fierce wrath takes possession of me, till I remember, as I hope I mostly do, that it was my good luck only of being born respectable and rich that has put me on this side of the window amid delightful books and lovely works of art, and not on the other side in the empty street, the drink-steeped liquor shops, and the foul and degraded lodgings. What words can say what it all means?'

What, I have asked myself, is there in those expressions that mark them in my mind as so distinctive of Morris? I think I have found the answer. It is, I think, because of the absence in them of any air of oracularity, any aloofness of mind, or assumption of superior wisdom or virtue, any speaking down to his hearers as though they were on an inferior human or intellectual level. Always he had a disposition to allude to his own comrades in his remarks, to speak as one of them, and to make them and himself friends with the audience. In other words it is, I think, because they betoken in Morris an innate predisposition to regard himself as one of the general community, as part of the common fellowship of those around him, a fellow man, a fellow citizen, a fellow dweller on earth, not only with

those whom he is addressing, but with all people in the world.

How rare that posture of mind is among writers, reformers, and public leaders, even those who are reckoned democratic! Of the poets I can recollect none except Robert Burns (different in temperament as he was) who is at all akin to him in this respect. Shelley always seemed to belong to a different world from mankind generally. Ruskin and Carlyle both acclaimed the dignity of labour, and both spoke as men who recognised the indivisible unity of rich and poor, educated and uneducated. We are all of the one body in God's sight, so they said. Nevertheless, they both posed as men of higher spiritual calling, higher moral and intellectual perception, than the mass of their fellows. The public, the people, the democracy, were a rather shapeless, nebulous mass or herd down below somewhere. With Ruskin, the people are always '*You*'; with Carlyle they are even farther away, they are '*They*'; but with Morris the people are always '*We*.' Ruskin and Carlyle are for ever scolding, are admonishing the public and mankind as 'Schoolmasters.' Morris always (except in explosive moments when he seemed kindled into a flame of Olympian or Jehovist wrath) spoke as a fellow-man and a fellow-sinner. Even when referring to the wrong-doings and stupidities of the public he almost invariably included himself as one equally guilty with the rest. Seldom, even in his most passionate protests as a Socialist against the evils of existing society, did he think of separating himself, or Socialists as a whole, from the full sweep of his expostulation.

Therein, I say, we discern something of that remarkable quality in Morris which makes so unique and attractive, and, I think, so prophetic, his character as a man and his teaching as a Socialist.

It is generally supposed that Morris' health was seriously impaired by his public speaking and agitation. Mr. Mackail, in his 'Life of Morris,' and other writers on Morris speak in this strain A similar idea, as my readers know,

prevails with respect to many other public men, even those who have lived, as so many public men do, to an advanced age.

This idea that popular agitation, especially in the form of public speaking, is injurious to the health, is, I think, except in the case of particularly weak and excitable men, an erroneous one, and is not supported by the testimony of political biography. On the contrary, the evidence goes to show that platform agitation, even when it takes the form of arduous indoor and outdoor speaking, day after day, is on the whole beneficial rather than harmful to both body and mind. Politicians and preachers are comparatively a long-lived class of men. Talleyrand, Lord John Russell, M. Guizot, M. Thiers, Lord Beaconsfield, John Bright, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Salisbury, Sir Charles Dilke, Lord Halsbury, M. Clemenceau, and Dr. John Clifford, who are among the most active public men in recent history, all have lived to a ripe old age. And even if we turn to the more democratic class of agitators, who have spent the greater part of their lives in popular (or perhaps I should say *unpopular*) agitation, often having to undergo great strain and hardship in constant travelling and speaking in all sorts of conditions and seasons, do we not find the same testimony? Robert Owen; John Wesley in his eighty-ninth year; George Jacob Holyoake lived till nearly ninety; and Mr. Robert Applegarth, the veteran Trade Union leader, is still with us at over eighty years. And have we not the striking instance of Mrs. Besant, who when a young woman was, as she herself tells us, consumptive and was told by her doctor that public lecturing would either kill or cure her? It cured her, and she is still alive and splendidly energetic though well over seventy years.

It would seem, therefore, that the notion that public agitation is inimical to health is a delusion.

Nor does it appear to me that the belief that Morris' health was undermined by the wear and tear of his work in the Socialist movement is well founded. Indeed, I am

persuaded that his Socialist agitation, so far from doing his health harm, refreshed his spirit, and was physically beneficial to him. He never, so far as I can ascertain, was more vigorous or freer from ailments, or more cheerful and happy, in the latter half of his life, than during the five years of his most active participation in Socialist propaganda.

Doubtless the irritation and worry of the internal strife in the movement in later years tended to depress him; but even then, may we not say that, so far from the strain of his exertions being the cause of his break-down, it was not until these dissensions led to his retirement from active propaganda that his health began to give way? Who knows but, had he been able to keep clear of these irritating controversies and had continued in the thick of the agitation, he might have lived another twenty years? And anyway, let us remember that countless men and women of robust constitutions, who never put foot on a public platform or become embroiled in political strife, die long before they reach Morris' age, which was sixty-two years.

I have, I think, already, as Mackail and others have done, likened Morris in many ways to a child. This characteristic of childlikeness has been frequently noted in men of creative and imaginative minds. Goldsmith, Blake, and Shelley are familiar instances. But in Morris the trait of childlikeness was the more singular because of the otherwise dominantly manly, self-reliant, and exceedingly manifest practical capacity of the man. In Shelley's case the childlikeness marked the poet's whole disposition, and constantly showed itself in his thoughtlessness concerning not only the feelings and interests, but even the existence of others, including his wife and family, in the common affairs of life, and in wholly wayward and irrational impulses and fancies. He was full of superstition about ghosts and dreams, and, grown man and father of a family as he was, would at times run truant in the woods for days, or burst naked into a drawing-room assembly of men and women. Morris showed none of these more 'infantile' (shall I say?) peculiarities.

He was full grown in all his habits and capacities, and thoroughly commonsense and competent to the finger-tips in all the affairs of life. But yet there was ever in him that spontaneity of liking and disliking, that wilfulness and yet tractability, that predisposition at one moment to engage in amusement and frolic, and the next to fall to desperate seriousness, which makes unselfconscious childhood such an unfailing source of perturbation and charm. His love of bright colours, and all natural objects and beautiful things; his restless eagerness to be doing something with his hands; his delight in companionship, in art and play, were all part of this elemental freshness of his nature.

Perhaps the greatest charm of childhood is its unselfconscious egoism, its 'ownselfness,' its un-posturingness. No man was ever less capable of attitudinising or showing off than Morris. One simply could not conceive of him saying or doing anything in order to attract attention upon himself or win admiration.

When, as so often he did, he told stories, or commented seriously or amusingly on people or buildings or happenings by the way, one felt that so far from doing so for the purpose of making himself noticeable, he would have made the same reflections to himself had no one been with him. The descriptions given us of many notable men of genius, even of such stately beings as George Meredith, staging their behaviour or remarks beforehand when expecting interesting visitors, would be unbelievable of William Morris.

CHAPTER XVII

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION

RELIGION was a subject on which Morris never touched, not at any rate in a critical or confessionary way, in his writings or public addresses, and but rarely I think in private conversation. Only on one or two occasions did he ever speak of his own ideas about religion in my hearing, and the subject is rarely alluded to in his letters or conversations in Mr. Mackail's life and May Morris' biographical notes.

Usually he spoke of himself as a pagan or an atheist, but never dogmatically or boastfully ; nor did he encourage argument on the subject.

He rather liked, when among us in Glasgow, to poke fun at Scottish 'unco guidism' and 'Sabbatarianism'—both of which national characteristics had, however, already become, or were becoming, issues of tradition rather than conviction so far as the bulk of the town people in Scotland were concerned.

On one occasion I happened incidentally to refer to the decay of religious observances in Scotland. 'But,' said Morris, with a challenging twinkle in his eye, 'you Scotch folk never had any religion, never at least since John Knox's day. You have merely a sort of theology, or rather a *devil*ology mixed up with Calvinistic metaphysics.'

I retorted by saying that English people never had any religion, they had merely 'Churchgoing.' 'Perhaps you are in the main right,' he replied, 'but at any rate their churchgoing was on the whole not an unpleasant sort of

pastime. Their churches were and still in many parts of the country usually are quite handsome buildings, good to look at both from the outside and the inside—but your Scottish Presbyterian conventicles—Oh my! Besides, the English Church service, however you may regard it through your Scottish "no popery" blinkers, is not at all a bad sort of way of making believe that you are grateful to Heaven for the good things and happiness of life, being that it is not Heaven's fault, but your own or somebody else's, if you don't happen to possess yourself of them and enjoy them.'

This idea of his, whimsically put as it was, that religion or religious worship, if we are to have religion at all, should be some mode of expressing the happiness of life, even as art should be, appears to have been deeply rooted in his mind. A story is related of him in connection with the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League meetings which is characteristic of this persuasion of his.

The branch was accustomed, as my readers know, to hold a meeting at Hammersmith Bridge on Sunday mornings in which Morris often took part. The possession of the ground was, however, contested by a group of Salvationists, who were usually on the scene an hour earlier than the Socialists. By a friendly arrangement it was eventually agreed that the Salvationists should wind up promptly at 11.30, provided the Socialists desisted until that time from any rival oratory. As often as not, however, the Salvationists, either from absorption in their mission or from, as was suspected, a desire to hold the crowd away from the 'infidel' teaching and 'worldly' hopes of the Socialists, far exceeded their allotted span of time: a breach of contract which always aroused Morris' 'dander.'

On one such occasion, losing all patience, Morris broke into the Salvationist ring, and addressing the Salvationist who was speaking exclaimed, 'Look here, my friend, you may think you are pleasing God by continuing your meeting beyond the agreed-upon time, but you are playing a nasty

trick, nevertheless; and what sort of God is your God anyway? Now I'll tell you the kind of God I should want my God to be. He'd be a big-hearted, jolly chap, who'd want to see everybody jolly and happy like Himself. He would talk to us about His work, about the seasons and flowers and birds, and so forth, and would say 'Gather round, boys, here's plenty of good victuals, and good wine also—come, put your hand to and help yourselves, and we'll have a pipe and a song and a merry time together.'

No one who really believes in God as an All-benevolent, Almighty Father, and who bears in mind Morris' inherently childlike way of looking at all things from a human level, will be disposed to see anything irreverent in this outburst. His whole conception of life as consisting in fellowship, in doing things to make oneself and one's fellows happy, his hatred of cruelty and oppression, selfishness, sordidness and ugliness in every form, was, if not religion itself, at least that without which religion becomes an illogical and unfeeling pietism or pretence. And it would be hard for any theologian whose creed is in accord with the laudatory psalms, the Messianic prophecies, and the essential teaching of the Gospels, to deny that in Morris' conception of what life on earth should be, and could be, there is a much nearer approach to the true Kingdom of God than is to be found in most of the conventional devotionalism of the Churches.

Yet many who are quite ready to see in what Morris called his 'paganism' a religion of life, consistent as far as it goes with the highest spiritual ideals, are disappointed by the absence in him of apparently any interest in beliefs and hopes concerning invisible things, concerning the great questions of the existence of the world, of life, of death, of eternity—questions which have pressed on the minds of the great thinkers and poets of all ages from Job and Aeschylus, Socrates and Omar Khayyám, Dante and Shakespeare, Spinoza and Milton, Hegel and Shelley. This sense of disappointment with the lack of any spiritual purpose or spiritual hope in Morris' teaching is, if I am

to judge from my own experience in later days, as well as from what I gather from my book-reading and from my conversations with others, more keenly or, at least, more widely felt now, than in Morris' day—quite recent though that be.

Supernaturalism and mysticism of every kind were then still in almost complete intellectual disrepute, bundled out of cultivated consideration by the Higher Criticism and scientific agnosticism. Thoughtful minds generally turned as implacably away from theosophy or any sort of deism or theism as from Biblical revelation. Old-world wisdom and old wives' wisdom were alike tabooed.

But a great change in the attitude of free thought is manifest since then. Earnest minds no longer presume the all-sufficiency of the laboratory and dissecting table as oracles of the mystery of matter and life. The advance of scientific knowledge—the astonishing discovery of the atom and the cell, and of the unsubstantiality or unmateriality, so to speak, of matter itself, and of the elusiveness of energy and life, as indicated by the newer theories of the nature of the ether, and the acceptance of thought-transference as a physical or psychological fact—these and other remarkable scientific discoveries which are leading science to what is seemingly the borderline of a world beyond the cognizance of the bodily senses, have powerfully affected the rationalism and idealism of the present day.

So great indeed has been the reaction of intelligent opinion in this respect, that no solution, however complete it be, of the problem of human happiness in relation to the material circumstances of life, suffices for the needs of thoughtful minds. Noble and beautiful as we may succeed in making the practice of life, this achievement alone will not yield us a self-containing philosophy or religion of life. It does not provide due nourishment and exercise for the intellectual and physical faculties of a large portion of the men and women in our midst to-day. The soul or spirit puts forth imperative claims for consideration.

Sharing, as I myself now do, very largely in this changed outlook of mind, I find the question forces itself upon me as it doubtless also does on many readers of these pages—Is the gospel of Art and Socialism as exemplified in the work and teaching of William Morris adequate as a practical precept and philosophy of life? Would I, for example, say to any earnest-minded young man or woman, 'Go and follow as far as in your power lies the teaching of William Morris, and therein you will find the whole duty and Kingdom of Man?' No, indeed, I should not. My infatuation, if such it be, for Morris' genius and achievement does not carry me to so rash a conclusion. But I should unhesitatingly say 'Go to Morris and follow him as far as relates to your duty towards your fellows, as friends, citizens, and workers, as far as concerns all things embraced in the terms, Society, industry, art, politics, and the common life of the community, and you will not go far wrong; indeed I do not think you will go wrong at all.' Morris' practical teaching he himself has crystallised into an axiom: 'There are only two ways to-day of being really happy—to work for Socialism or to do work worthy of Socialism.' And to doers of the will, knowledge of the doctrine has been promised.

But having said so much on the subject of Morris and religion, I perceive I must yet, for my own satisfaction, say a word or two more. For I find myself haunted with the thought that I, like others who knew him, may have too readily assumed that because he did not in his public utterances or except in rare instances in private conversations (so far as I have heard tell) discuss the deeper questions of religion, he therefore took no interest in these questions, and possessed no beliefs or hopes concerning them. How far wrong all this may be! Indeed, considering how essentially moral (I use the word in its strongest and truest sense) was Morris' whole attitude to life, and how deeply instinctive were the powers of his nature, it seems incredible that there did not lie somewhere in him thoughts and

cravings beyond what the senses and experience of what we call the material world can supply.

The fact that he did not choose to speak about these themes, that he did not feel he was likely to derive any satisfaction from the discussion of them, may as reasonably be interpreted as an indication of the deep regard in which he held them, as of mere indifference towards them. He knew enough about theological and philosophical controversy to know that all the disputation of the ages had resulted in no clearer understanding of the reason or mystery of these problems. And is it not true besides that it is often just those subjects—subjects relating to our deeper intellectual emotions—that we shrink most from dragging into the arena of discussion? They lie too deep for ratiocination. The light must come to each from within not without.

One evening, probably the last I spent with him, sitting in the library, he asked abruptly:

'Do you ever think about death? I hate to think about it, but my illness has forced the thought of it on me, worse luck. Yes, I hate it, but I don't fear it. I love life, I love the world. The world contains everything beautiful and joyful. I know of no happiness that I can desire, no life that I should wish to live, that could give me more happiness than this world and life can give. Barring human wrong-doing, and disease, decrepit old age, and death, I see no imperfection in it. Heaven, or another life beyond the grave, of which men dream and hope so fondly, could give me nothing which I possess the faculties to use or enjoy, that the present world and life cannot give, except maybe—were it true—reunion with those who have gone before or who will shortly afterwards follow. Human wrong-doing and perhaps disease can be got rid of: but old age and death are irremediable. Sometimes death appears to me awful, terrible, so cruel, so absurd. Yet there are times when I don't have that feeling and death seems sweet and desirable. I sometimes think how sweet it would be to lie in the earth at the feet

of the grass and flowers, if only I could see the old church, and the meadow, and hear the birds and the voices of the village folk. But that, of course, would not be death; and I suppose that I should soon want to be up and doing. No, I cannot think it out. It is inexplicable.

'There is Tolstoy, too. There is much that is interesting in him and in his "Inward Light" idea. I do not despise his teaching. I only feel that it leads me deeper into the insoluble mystery.'

* * * * * *

I must warn my readers that in these jottings I am giving rather what expresses my present impression of some of Morris' observations than what he actually said or meant to convey. My mind, as I have already said, was not, at that time, closely bent on religious topics. Had I been listening to him now, or even a year or two later, when my mind was re-opening itself to the wonder of these high questions of belief—with what ardour and care I should have made record of every word of his conversation!

Only on one other occasion did he speak to me in an intimate way about the deeper problems of religion. I had not intended trying to set down in these pages his remarks on that occasion, because on my first reflecting back on our conversation my recollection of it hardly seemed to yield any additional light on the inner state of his mind. But the foregoing considerations have now made me think that I may be wrong in that judgment; and I have decided therefore to recall as clearly as I can the tenor of his remarks.

The conversation to which I refer took place during one of my last talks with him: indeed, I am not sure but that it was the very last time we spoke together in his library at Kelmscott House. I cannot now remember what led him to allude to the subject; but perhaps it arose from my having mentioned to him that I had, that morning, on my way to his house, met Mr. Touzeau Paris, a neighbour

of his, formerly an ardent secularist lecturer, and now no less zealous as a propagandist in the Socialist movement.

'What are your present-day opinions about religion?' he asked abruptly.

I replied that I was still, so far as I knew, an agnostic; but that I was not so sure now as I used to be that agnosticism or materialism was the last word on the subject.

'Perhaps,' he said, 'I am much in the same position; but I have never allowed myself to worry about these questions since I was at Oxford thinking of becoming a parson. Don't you think I should have made a capital bishop?—I should like to have swaggered about in full canonicals anyway, but not in shovel hat, apron and gaiters—Oh my! But so far as I can discover from logical thinking, I am what is called bluntly an Atheist. I cannot see any real evidence of the existence of God or of immortality in the facts of the world—amazing as is the whole phenomenon of the universe. And of this I am absolutely convinced—that if there is a God, He never meant us to know much about Himself, or indeed to concern ourselves about Him at all. Had He so wished, don't you think He would have made His existence and wishes so overwhelmingly clear to us that we could not possibly have ever doubted about it at all?

'But Atheist though I must consider myself when I reason about the matter, my Atheism has as little effect upon my ordinary conduct and work-a-day views of things, as belief in Christ appears to have on the majority of Christians. So far as I commonly think and act, I do so precisely as do most other fairly sensible folk—that is to say, I think and act in accordance with the thoughts, traditions, and habits of my day and generation. Commonly, in all that concerns my thought and work, I think of God and Christ, Angels and Saints, just as do devout churchmen, and so also in a way when I think about Greek and Scandinavian mythology, I do so doubtless as the Greeks and Norsemen did. The Gods are all as real to my imagination as are historical and

living persons, and their miraculous powers seem quite natural to their office, so to speak. Some people, as you know, have upbraided Burne-Jones and myself for using so much Christian legend and symbolism in our work, all of which they say is quite outside the belief of any but most crudely superstitious minds ; but the fools do not perceive that with us in our art Christian legends and symbolism are as true as with any of themselves—as true and as eternal as the world itself in which we live. When, for example, I look at Burne-Jones' "The Merciful Knight," in which the Christ figure on the crucifix stoops down to kiss the Knight, the meaning and lesson of the picture is not a whit less true or real to me than to Cardinal Newman or Bishop Lightfoot. In a sense, therefore, I am just as much a Christian as are professed Christians, and in the practical sense of believing in Christ's example and teaching I am, I hope, much more a Christian than the majority of them are. And I suspect that if we got to close terms we should find also that they are just about as much Atheists and Infidels as are Annie Besant and myself. What do you think ?'

Then, after a moment, he observed, 'The truth is that none of us know what actually the universe is of which we ourselves form a part. Priests, prophets, and philosophers in all ages have puzzled themselves trying to find out God, and are no nearer the end of their quest to-day than five thousand years ago. We do not know what we ourselves are, or what the world is, nor, if it comes to that, do we know what poetry, or art, or happiness is. One thing is quite certain to me, and that is that our beliefs, whatever they be, whether concerning God, or nature, or art, or happiness, are in the end only of account in so far as they affect the right doings of our lives, so far, in fact, as they make ourselves and our fellows happy. And in actual fact I find about the same amount of goodness and badness, happiness and misery among peoples of all creeds—Jew, Christian, and Gentile. On the whole, therefore, I opine that our religion, our duty, and our happiness are one and

the same—and our duty and happiness is, or ought to be, to grow and live, to be beautiful and happy as the flowers and the birds are. God, if there is a God, will never be angry with us for doing or being that; and if there be, as perhaps most of us sometimes almost hope there may be, an after-life, we shan't be the less fit for its fellowship by having made ourselves good fellows in this.'

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